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Britain 1890–1924

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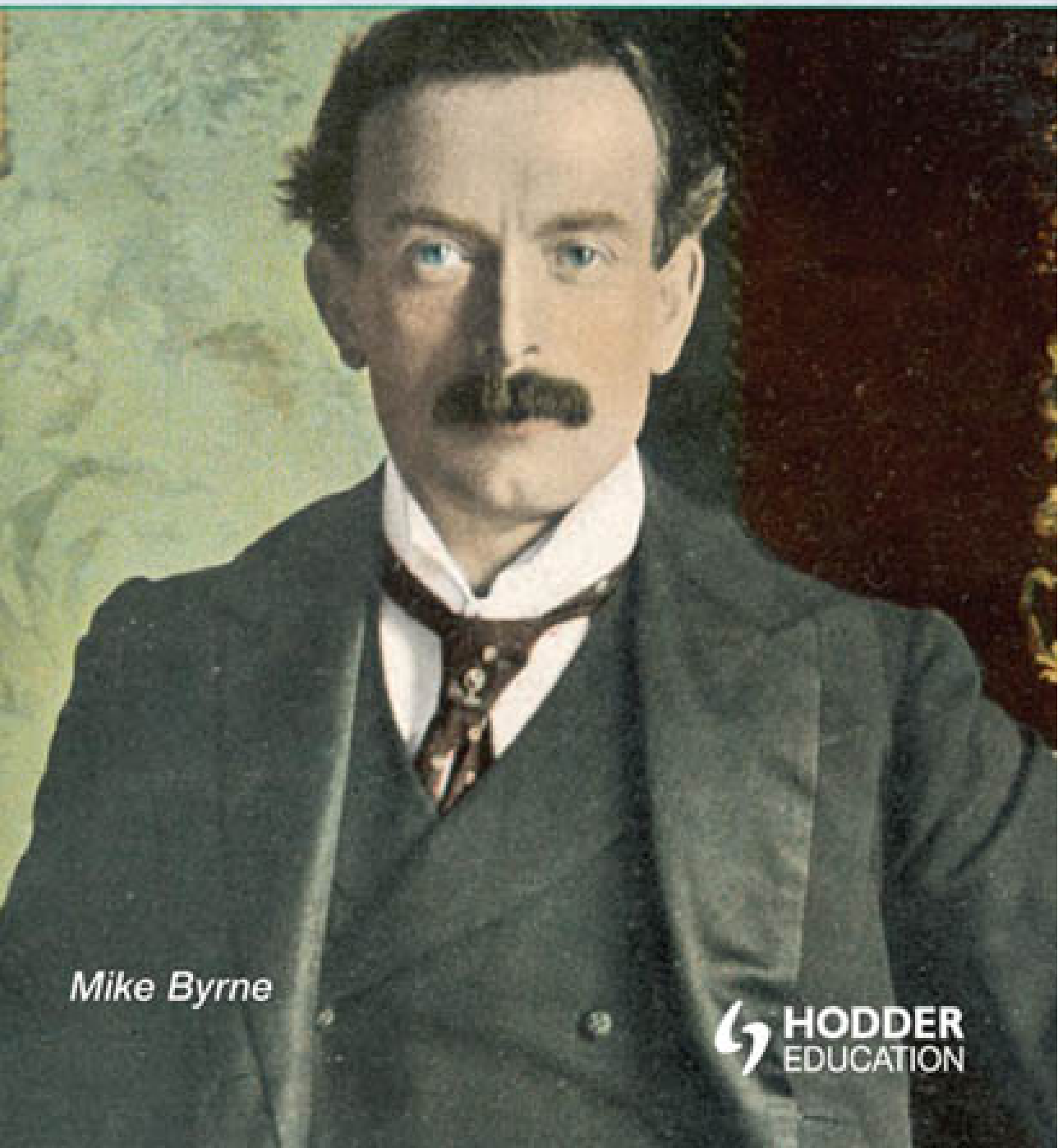

Mike Byrne

HODDER EDUCATION

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Dedication

Keith Randell (1943–2002)

The *Access to History* series was conceived and developed by Keith, who created a series to 'cater for students as they are, not as we might wish them to be'. He leaves a living legacy of a series that for over 20 years has provided a trusted, stimulating and well-loved accompaniment to post-16 study. Our aim with these new editions is to continue to offer students the best possible support for their studies.

Introduction

Key terms

Female suffrage
The right of women to vote in parliamentary elections.

Unionism
Unionists were those who argued that the Union between Great Britain and Ireland must be kept at all costs and that any measure of Home Rule for Ireland was bound to lead to separation in the long run.

Liberalism
The political idea that personal freedom was the best way to promote the welfare of both individuals and the nation. Gladstone, the Liberal Prime Minister, particularly emphasised that this should also mean minimal interference by the state and minimal taxation. His view has become known as 'Gladstonian Liberalism'. More radical Liberals disagreed and wanted state intervention to help the disadvantaged.

The period 1890–1924 was one of the most turbulent periods of British political history. During that time both of the main political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, suffered fluctuating fortunes and underwent traumatic changes:

- In 1906 the Liberal Party won a general election victory on such a scale that its political position seemed assured for the future.
- In the same election a new political force, the Labour Party, secured a foothold in the House of Commons.
- The issue of **female suffrage** was transformed from an obscure issue into a national crusade that challenged the political system and defied the rule of law.
- The House of Lords, which had regarded itself for so long as the guardian of the constitution, was reduced to a shadow of its former power and prestige.
- Welfare legislation raised government intervention to new and unprecedented heights.
- Irish affairs plunged political life into turmoil and even seemed to threaten a civil war within the British Isles.
- Disputes between employers and trade unions, often with the government sandwiched uncomfortably between them, brought class conflicts to the surface.

Unionism

Before the 1906 general election, the political world had been dominated by an alliance between the Conservative Party and those Liberal Unionists who had split from Gladstone over the issue of Irish Home Rule in 1886. So strong did this theme of '**Unionism**' become that, for a time, the term 'Conservative Party' almost fell out of use.

Liberalism

Liberalism, too, underwent a dramatic change. The Liberal Party that won the general election in 1906 was a very different one from that which had been led by Gladstone. Many active Liberal supporters had defected to the Unionist side, including, in particular, many from the world of industry and commerce who abandoned their traditional liberalism for the apparent safety of the Conservatives or Liberal Unionists. Their defections were

partly the result of increasing signs of **radicalism** within the Liberal Party, which was gradually intervening more in social issues.

This 'New Liberalism' seemed far removed from the largely non-interventionist and individualist traditions of Gladstonian Liberalism. The huge scale of the Liberal Party's victory in the 1906 general election guaranteed many new faces among the ranks of Liberal MPs. The 'New Liberal' element among them ensured that the traditional Liberal emphasis on the importance of individual liberty and self-reliance would increasingly give way to demands for social welfare.

Key terms

Radicalism
Radicalism was a term applied generally to those who believed that the political, social and economic systems of the country needed reform of a very significant degree – changing very basic things such as how poverty was relieved or who should have the right to vote.

The Future of the Nation

The political rivalry between Liberalism and Unionism took shape in a period of increasing concern about the whole question of Britain's future as a nation, a great power and an empire. The stability of the nation was threatened most seriously and immediately by the Irish Question. Unionism was based on the assumption that Irish Home Rule would prove to be merely the prelude to a complete separation of Ireland from Great Britain. Some politicians saw 'Home Rule all round' (i.e. for Wales and Scotland as well as Ireland) as the solution. The Birmingham-based radical leader Joseph Chamberlain suggested this in 1886 in response to Gladstone's adoption of the policy of Irish Home Rule.

However, others believed that such a development would threaten the whole concept of the British Empire and lead to its disintegration. If that happened, it was argued, Britain in the future would be condemned to decline to the status of a second-rate power. Such concerns about the future of the Home Countries and the Empire inevitably raised the question – just how secure was Britain's status as a 'Great Power'?

The Impact of the First World War

This question of Britain's position as a 'Great Power' was answered in the short term by the First World War, which began in August 1914. As a result of victory in war Britain's global responsibilities were increased. The threat of German domination in Europe was removed at least for the time being. British financial strength was not seriously damaged. Internationally, Britain seemed to have achieved a new peak of power and influence. Domestically, however, the war had set great changes in motion. The Liberal Party that had dominated government since 1905 was weakened. The Conservative Party had revived in strength. The Labour Party would emerge as the alternative party of government to the Conservatives.

1 Lord Salisbury and the Unionist Ascendancy 1890–1905

POINTS TO CONSIDER

Unionism was a description of the political identity of those who opposed the policy of Home Rule for Ireland as proposed by Gladstone in 1886. The term the 'Unionist Party' grew out of the close association between the Conservatives, led by Lord Salisbury, and the 'Liberal Unionists', led by Joseph Chamberlain, who split away from the main Liberal Party in protest against Gladstone's insistence on Home Rule. The period 1890–1905 was an important time of transition for the two main parties and also saw the emergence of the Labour Party. This chapter considers the period through the following themes:

- The career of Lord Salisbury and his importance as a Conservative leader
- Britain's status as a world power: its economy and the issue of social reform
- New Imperialism
- The Boer War
- The reasons for the decline and catastrophic defeat of the Unionist Party in 1906

Key dates

1886 Conservatives and Liberal Unionists combine to defeat the first Home Rule Bill

1892 Conservatives and Liberal Unionists agree joint anti-Home Rule election campaign

1895 Salisbury, leader of the Conservative Party, forms a coalition 'Unionist' government with the Liberal Unionists, led by Joseph Chamberlain

1896 Jameson's Raid, attempting to overthrow the government of Transvaal, causes an international scandal

1897 Workmen's Compensation Act gives limited help to some categories of workers injured in their workplaces

1899 Boer War begins
1900 General election results in overwhelming victory for the Unionist Government
1901 Queen Victoria dies
1902 British victory in the Boer War
Lord Salisbury resigns as Prime Minister and is replaced by his nephew, A.J. Balfour
The Education Act
1903 Joseph Chamberlain announces his policy of 'Tariff Reform and Imperial Preference' and resigns from the Cabinet to lead a national campaign
1905 Balfour resigns and the king appoints the Liberal leader, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, as Prime Minister
1906 The Liberal Party wins a massive victory in the general election

1 | Lord Salisbury

Key question
How did Lord Salisbury come to dominate British politics?

Lord Robert Cecil (Salisbury) was born in 1830. He was the second son of the then Lord Salisbury and therefore not originally destined to succeed to his father's title. He had the usual educational experience of one of his class – public school (Eton), and then on to Oxford, but there things began to go wrong. Before he could complete his degree he suffered a breakdown and was sent abroad by his family to recover his health. On his return he married against his father's wishes and, as a result, found himself forced to live on only a minimal allowance by his standards. Needing to make his own way in the world, he used his social position to enter politics, becoming an MP at the age of 23.

MPs at that time had no salary, so Salisbury was obliged to find some method of earning a living to supplement his allowance. He hit upon the idea of writing political articles and proved to be very successful at it. He soon became a respected authority on constitutional matters and, in particular, on foreign policy. He wrote regularly for the most famous conservative magazine of the day, *The Quarterly Review*, and was soon seen as a rising young star of the Conservative Party.

The death of his elder brother made him the heir to the family estates. Now using the family's second title, Viscount Cranborne, he accepted a **Cabinet** place in Lord Derby's Conservative Government of 1866–8 as Indian Secretary. However, when Derby retired and was replaced by Benjamin Disraeli in 1868, he refused to continue in office, having many times in the past criticised Disraeli in his political articles. Also in 1868 his father died, leaving him the title, the great family estates and a formidable social position to add to his already strong political credibility. At this stage he was marked out as a near certainty to lead the Conservative Party at some point in the future.

Lord Salisbury dominated the Conservative Party and with it British politics following the death of Benjamin Disraeli in 1881.

Key term
Cabinet
The highest level of government, the members of which run the most important government departments.

By 1874 he had made up his differences with Disraeli and agreed to join the new government that was formed in that year. Initially he was Indian Secretary again, but in 1878 he was promoted to **Foreign Secretary** and in that same year accompanied Disraeli to one of the great diplomatic events of the nineteenth century, the Congress of Berlin. In this conference, called to avoid war between the Great Powers over Russian aggression against Turkey, Salisbury took the lead in organising the minute details of the settlement with his counterparts from Germany, France, Austria and Russia.

In 1881, when Disraeli died, Salisbury was the obvious successor. When Gladstone's government fell in 1885 he took over as Prime Minister for the first of three administrations; 1885–6, 1886–92 and 1895–1902. For most of his years as Prime Minister he combined the office with that of Foreign Secretary. He retired as Prime Minister in 1902 and died the following year. He was the last peer to hold the office of Prime Minister.

Key question
What beliefs were central to Salisbury's view of government?

Political ideas

Conservatism

Lord Salisbury faced the central problem that all conservatives have contended with before his time and since. That is – what is it that should be 'conserved' and how best can conservation be achieved?

Like all conservatives he faced the paradox that sometimes the only way to conserve one thing is to reform or give up something else. Salisbury was a formidable politician. He realised that **Conservatism** needed a coherent and convincing response to the issues of the day. He understood that it had to appeal to the working-class voters as well as the middle and upper classes. He also saw that the working class in Britain was mainly conservative in instinct and that properly managed the system could remain stable despite its obvious social inequalities.

Key terms

Foreign Secretary
The Cabinet minister responsible for handling the country's relations with foreign powers and its responses to international events.

Conservatism
The political principle that the presentation of traditions and existing institutions should be assumed to be the objective of politics.

Anglican
One who accepts the doctrine of the Anglican Church of England.

Fatalism

Salisbury was an intensely devout **Anglican** and this gave him a sense of inner strength and certainty that helped him to frame his ideas. He was also a fatalist. That is to say he truly believed that many things in human affairs were beyond the capacity of men to affect and that fate or destiny was a determining factor in how events turned out. It followed then that he did not have unlimited faith in the ability of governments to deal with every turn of events. He once likened conducting foreign policy, his main interest, to travelling downstream in a canoe using the paddle to fend off collisions. In other words, he did not really believe that governments or anyone else were fully in control of their destinies, only God had full control.

Salisbury had a genuine fear of what he called 'disintegration'. By this he meant the breaking up of all the things that held society and the nation together. He championed the class system as the only way to conduct a civilised society. However, he recognised the destructive potential of class conflicts and was prepared to accept some social reforms as necessary for social harmony.

Unionism

In the late 1880s and early 1890s he was most preoccupied by the issue of Irish **Home Rule**, which he saw as likely to bring about the disintegration of the United Kingdom and with it the Empire. To avoid this he was prepared to forge an alliance with the Liberal Unionists who had left the Liberal Party in opposition to Gladstone's policy of Irish Home Rule.

In 1895 he opted to form a coalition government with the Liberal Unionists in order to consolidate the opposition to Home Rule. General elections in 1895 and 1900 both gave the Conservative Party an overall majority which would have allowed Salisbury to avoid coalitions, but he deliberately chose not to do this because he believed that, in the long term, it was wiser to build the strongest possible barrier to Home Rule.

Key term

Home Rule
The principle that Ireland should control its own *internal* affairs within the United Kingdom.

Key dates

Conservatives and Liberal Unionists combine to defeat the first Home Rule Bill: 1886

Conservatives and Unionists agree joint anti-Home Rule election campaign: 1892

Salisbury forms a coalition 'Unionist' government with the Liberal Unionists, led by Joseph Chamberlain: 1895

General election results in overwhelming victory for the Unionist Government: 1900

Conclusion

His specific ideas on politics can be summarised as follows:

- The integrity of the monarchy, the Church of England and the parliamentary system of government (often referred to as the 'Institutions of State') must be preserved at all cost.
- The Empire must be preserved as the only sure guarantee that Great Britain would maintain its position as a first class power.
- Reforms should be introduced as and when they were necessary to ensure that the Institutions of State and the Empire were protected.

Although determined to work for the principles of government and society he believed in, Salisbury was not ambitious personally. He regarded governmental office as a duty to which men of his class and ability were called. Salisbury did not regard being Prime Minister as an achievement but as an unwelcome burden he was required to shoulder. In so far as he desired public office at all, he would have preferred to concentrate on being Foreign Secretary. In 1895 he even tried to persuade one of the leading Liberal Unionists, the Duke of Devonshire, to accept the post of Prime Minister, before being forced to agree that this would not be acceptable to the Conservative Party, who expected him to lead the government. When Salisbury eventually retired in 1902 it was without regret, rather with relief.

2 | A Great Power in Decline?

Key question
How serious were the problems facing Britain at the end of the 1890s?

Concerns about Britain's future as a Great Power gathered momentum in the 1890s. They were based on four considerations.

- First, there was the question of Britain's diplomatic 'isolation' and the increasing hostility with which she was regarded by other nations. (This question is discussed in Chapter 7.)
- Second, there was the question of Britain's economic performance and the extent to which other nations were catching up with, or even overtaking, Britain as the leading manufacturing and commercial power.

- Third, there was the question of the condition of the working classes in Britain and the extent to which this was undermining Britain both economically and socially.
- Finally, there was the issue of Ireland and the integrity of the United Kingdom as a unified state. (This is dealt with more fully in Chapter 6.)

Key question
Why were there concerns about the British economy in this period?

Economic performance

Concern about the performance of the British economy stemmed from the 1870s. For nearly three decades before this the economy had been growing relatively consistently, but it was suddenly beset by a series of slumps interspersed with temporary revivals. The last of these slumps ended in 1896 and was followed by a steady, if slow, period of economic expansion up to 1914, with only one downturn in the period 1907–10.

However, despite this 'recovery', the cycle of slumps over a 25-year period up to 1896 had been enough to undermine the confidence in British economic strength which had been taken for granted in the middle years of the century – a period which has been characterised as the '**Great Victorian Boom**'.

Key term
Great Victorian Boom
An expression customarily used to describe the expansion of production in agriculture and industry during the period 1850–70.

Economic historians disagree about the significance of the period after 1870. At one time it was customary to refer to the last quarter of the nineteenth century as the 'Great Depression'. More recently however, most economic historians have rejected this view, preferring to describe the period as one involving a 'retardation of growth'; that is to say, a slowing down of the earlier, rapid expansion of the economy, until a lower, more sustainable pattern of growth was reached in the 1890s.

Industry

In retrospect it is easy to see that fears about the strength of the British economy in this period were exaggerated. In fact, the economy was performing in a rather erratic way. For example, the period after 1870 was precisely when Britain was emerging as the world's leading shipbuilding nation – a status she was to maintain through many trials and tribulations until the Second World War.

Output of iron and steel continued to increase, despite competition from Germany and the USA, and even the inefficient British coal industry continued to remain profitable in the years up to 1914, buoyed up by consistently increasing world demand for coal.

However, it is also true that Britain did not expand as rapidly as Germany or the USA in the newer industrial sectors, such as electrical engineering and chemical production.

Agriculture

The agricultural sector, however, faced a more difficult problem, in that cheap imports of cereals from the 1870s put pressure on British farmers and forced them to reduce their production. Even livestock farmers faced some competition as steamships with refrigerated cargo holds allowed cheap meat to be imported from abroad.

The case for a 'Great Depression' in the agricultural sector is thus more convincing than that for industry, but even so the picture was not one of unrelieved gloom. Cheaper imports of cereals meant cheaper foodstuffs for livestock farmers and in some parts of the country, farm rents actually rose in this period as profits soared. Moreover, the availability of cheaper food meant that, across the nation as a whole, the value of wages was consistently rising in real terms, despite the effects of the periodic slumps.

International trade

The most obvious, and most discussed aspect of economic performance, was the question of international trade. More specifically, there was the question of German imports and the size of the **trade gap** that began to increase after 1870. Such gaps had, however, existed even in the 1850s and were always more than covered by the value of so-called **invisible earnings** from insurance, shipping charges and banking services that brought increasingly vast profits into the British economy. London remained the commercial centre of the world and its dominance was unchallenged.

Nevertheless, having noted that much of the concern about British economic performance was exaggerated, it is important to realise that what people at the time believed to be the case is often more important to understanding that period, than what subsequent historical research and deliberation reveal to have been the case.

Key terms

Trade gap
Where the value of items imported into the country exceed the value of exports.

Invisible earnings
Earnings from insurance premiums, shipping and brokerage fees, where no actual sale of goods was involved.

Unionism and social reform

Key question
Why did social reform become an issue in this period?

What helped create concern about the condition of the working classes was the publication of evidence in 'scientific' investigations into poverty that began to appear in the 1880s. Charles Booth, a shipping magnate, published details of his investigation into the London district of Tower Hamlets in 1887. He claimed that one-third of the population was living below the **poverty line**. Booth went on to conduct a series of investigations between 1891 and 1903. His work was paralleled by the study of poverty in York undertaken by Seebohm Rowntree and published in 1901. These investigations and others, similar if less well known, were prompted partly by genuine **humanitarian** concerns and partly by violent demonstrations by unemployed men in the mid-1880s coinciding with one of the periodic economic slumps.

These investigations were also intended to provide factual evidence about poverty, in contrast to the rather emotional and sensational accounts that were becoming common in the 1880s. Their chief value was to demonstrate that unemployment and poverty could not be viewed solely as the result of vice or laziness. Indeed, one result of Booth's findings was to show clearly that the chief factor in poverty was family size and that the number of children in a family was a more significant element in determining living standards than unemployment.

Key terms

Poverty line
The level of income needed to support the minimum requirements of life in terms of food, accommodation, etc. Obviously this would vary according to family size.

Humanitarian
Concern for the human condition and especially for those thought to be unable to protect themselves.

Conditions such as in this slum in London in the 1870s led people to become concerned about poverty.

The poor physical condition of many of the would-be recruits for the Boer War of 1899–1902 added fuel to the fires of publicity that scientific investigation had stoked. It added to the idea that poverty and degradation were turning the British lower classes into some kind of subspecies. Booth had written that the:

> lives of the poor lay hidden from view behind curtains on which were painted terrible pictures; starving children, suffering women, overworked men …

His (unrelated) namesake, William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, published a pamphlet in 1890 entitled *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, in which he portrayed the working-class

districts as more remote than darkest Africa in terms of their remoteness from the experience of the upper and middle classes. This idea that the condition of the working classes posed some kind of nameless threat to civilised standards was to prove a potent force in promoting the acceptability of **interventionist social reform**.

Responses to the problem of poverty

It was perhaps inevitable that people concerned with both the apparent economic decline of Britain and the supposed physical deterioration of the working classes should seek to establish some link between the two. The more extreme responses to the problem pressed for:

- sterilisation and **selective breeding programmes**
- bans on foreign immigration, as it was allegedly polluting the 'bloodstock' of the British race, contributing to unemployment and spreading diseases. In 1905 an "Aliens Act" was introduced aimed at refusing entry to Britain to those immigrants thought to be incapable of supporting themselves, or carrying diseases.

The idea that national efficiency was being undermined and that something needed to be done about it was embraced by a wide range of writers, from **socialists** such as Sidney and Beatrice Webb, who became leading figures in the Labour Party, to **imperialists** such as Lord Rosebery. Social reform was an obvious objective for those who argued that poverty was the main cause of the social degradation that was threatening national efficiency and the future of the British Empire.

The Education Act 1902

One particularly relevant social issue was that of popular education and the effectiveness of the system that had been put into place during Gladstone's first administration in 1870.

The idea that British education was inferior in many respects to that of other countries had long been taking shape. Most attention was usually focused on the deficiencies of British technical and scientific education compared to that offered to the general population in Germany or France. The belief that national efficiency could be promoted, or, to put it another way, that national decline could be halted by a reform of the education system was one of the reasons for the passing of a controversial Education Act by the Unionist Government in 1902.

The Duke of Devonshire, who was the Cabinet minister responsible for education, and Arthur Balfour, Salisbury's nephew and the Leader of the House of Commons, both favoured a fundamental reform of the education system. Both were impressed by the argument that an efficient and properly funded education system was essential for a modern state aiming to maintain its place in the world.

In 1902, these two men took charge of the drafting of an education bill designed to bring about a substantial measure of

Key terms

Interventionist social reform
Reforms relying on direct action by Government to enforce conditions.

Selective breeding programmes
The principle of ensuring that only those who are free from disease and hereditary defects are allowed to reproduce.

Socialist
The political principle that requires the abolition of private property in favour of public ownership.

Imperialist
The principle of territorial expansion by a country in order to strengthen its position.

Key question
What did the Education Act seek to achieve?

Key term

Nonconformist
Member of any Protestant Christian Church (i.e. not a Roman Catholic) that did not 'conform' to the teachings of the Anglican Church of England. Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists are examples.

Key terms

Elementary education Compulsory basic education provided up to the age of 11 or 12 for all children.

Secondary education Further non-compulsory education, usually only undertaken by middle-class or better-off working-class children, which ended at any age up to 18.

Royal Commission Set up to investigate a particular issue and usually to suggest a course of action. Generally composed of a mixture of politicians, interested parties and experts in whatever field under enquiry.

reform. Lord Salisbury was dubious about it, but since he intended to retire from the premiership in the near future he did not oppose the idea. Joseph Chamberlain was also unenthusiastic, not because he undervalued education, but because, as a **Nonconformist** he could anticipate the storm that would result from any attempt at government interference in the role played by the Churches in the provision of education, or from any attempt to fund Anglican schools from local rates. However, Chamberlain could not overrule Balfour who was the clear successor to Salisbury as Prime Minister.

The purpose of the Education Act

The purpose of the 1902 Education Act was to provide a new structure for both **elementary** and **secondary education** under local authority control. The school boards that had been set up under the 1870 Act had legal powers only in respect of elementary provision. Over the years, many Boards had gone well beyond their authority by providing secondary education as well. This meant that they were using ratepayers' money without any legal basis.

The situation came to a head in 1901, when a court case was brought against the London School Board for the recovery of expenses they had spent in providing secondary education courses. The judge ruled against the Board on the grounds that the 1870 Act implied that rates could be spent only on children taking basic subjects. This judgement led to severe restrictions on school board spending on technical, evening and adult classes, all of which had been expanding in recent years and all of which could be argued to be contributing to the creation of a better educated population.

At central level, responsibility for both elementary and secondary education had been assumed by a Board of Education, created in 1899 on the advice of a **Royal Commission**. Balfour and Devonshire therefore proposed to extend this principle to the local level.

Key question
Why did education become a political battleground?

Opposition to the Act

The Education Act of 1902 was passed amidst great controversy, as Salisbury and Chamberlain had foreseen.

The Act swept away the old school boards and created Local Education Authorities under the County and Borough Councils. These LEAs had responsibility for both elementary and secondary education and were also required to support the voluntary (Church) schools out of the rates. This latter provision caused the political controversy. Nonconformists were outraged by the idea of ratepayers' money being used to support the **Anglican schools**. The Liberals, conscious of their traditional political support among the Nonconformists, fought the proposal every inch of the way in the House of Commons and a great national campaign of opposition began, in which the Welsh radical, David Lloyd George, himself a Nonconformist, took a leading role.

Key term

Anglican schools Originally called 'National Schools', these schools provided elementary education and were sponsored by the Church of England.

Profile: Joseph Chamberlain 1836–1914

1836 – Born in London
1873–5 – Mayor of Birmingham
1876 – Became a Liberal MP
1880 – Became a member of Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade
1886 – Resigned from government over issue of Home Rule
1889 – Became leader of the Liberal Unionists
1895 – Joined the coalition government of Lord Salisbury as Colonial Secretary
1903 – Announced his policy of 'Tariff Reform and Imperial Preference' and resigned from the Cabinet to lead a national campaign
1906 – Withdrew from public life
1914 – Died

Early life

Joseph Chamberlain was born in London in 1836 into a comfortable, but not exceptionally wealthy, middle-class family. They were Nonconformists belonging to the Unitarian Church denomination and Chamberlain's education was in small private schools that were acceptable to the religious viewpoint of his family. He did not therefore have access to the traditional training ground for high-profile politicians – major public school followed by Oxford or Cambridge.

At 16 he left school and entered the family business and at 18 he left for Birmingham to work in a new business venture in which his father had made an investment of several hundred pounds.

Entry into politics

Chamberlain eventually took charge of the business and turned it into a corporate empire. By the time he was in his thirties he was a millionaire and looking to leave his business affairs to managers while he concentrated on politics. He was the first major national politician to make his name in local politics and then transfer to the greater stage.

In 1873–5 he was mayor of Birmingham, a city which he transformed with a series of major public works such as slum clearance and bringing in gas and water supplies, street lighting and civic buildings. His work there made his a national figure and he became one of the city's MPs in 1876.

Cabinet minister

His reputation as a radical champion of reforms to benefit the working classes put him at the forefront of the radical liberals and, in 1880, Gladstone had little option but to offer him a post in the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade.

Seeing himself as a (not too distant) future leader of the Liberal Party, Chamberlain was impatient with Gladstone's reluctance to promote him to a more senior post, but, despite snubs from Gladstone, who did not consider Chamberlain a 'gentleman', he

refused to resign from the government until 1886 when Gladstone declared his intention to bring in Home Rule for Ireland. Chamberlain saw this as potentially leading to the break up of the United Kingdom and the Empire, which he already saw as being of central importance in his ideas. He also thought that Home Rule was a distraction from the more important issues of social reform.

The Liberal Unionists

From 1889 Chamberlain became the leader of the group of Liberal Unionists that had split with Gladstone. He gradually drew closer to the Conservatives, believing that the party that had brought in many social reforms under Disraeli in the 1870s could be the vehicle for his own ambitions.

In 1895 he joined the coalition government of Lord Salisbury as Colonial Secretary. His imperial policies aimed at promoting unity within the empire made him a controversial figure and, in 1903, he left the government to campaign for the end of free trade and the setting up of a system of general tariffs with preferential treatment for the Empire. In 1906 he suffered a stroke that eventually led to his complete physical incapacity and withdrawal from public life. He died in 1914.

Attempts at compromise failed completely. Joseph Chamberlain suggested avoiding using the rates altogether by increasing government grants, but the cost of the Boer War ruled out that idea. Another possibility was a clause introducing an 'adoptive principle', under which it would have been left to local authorities to decide whether or not to use the rates in this way. Balfour was against this on the grounds that it meant that this issue would always be a political one and lead to endless arguments at local level as well as leaving some Anglican schools at the mercy of hostile local councils. A good many Tories sympathised with Balfour's position and the clause was removed.

Political effects of the Education Act

The passing of the 1902 Education Act cost the Unionist government dearly in political terms. There were over 70,000 prosecutions for non-payment of rates in the following year and in Wales, where Nonconformity was strong, the opposition was bitter. The Liberals reaped the benefit of a great revival in Nonconformity, which had been markedly on the decline. The issue also enabled the Liberals to mend the party split that had occurred over the Boer War (see page 19).

Within the government itself the Education Act had a divisive effect. One of the fundamental realities of the Unionist Coalition was its bringing together of Anglican and Nonconformist opinion – the latter being most obviously represented by the prominent position of Chamberlain. The maintenance of a kind of status quo had been central to this understanding. Chamberlain was deeply embarrassed with his own Nonconformist supporters by the controversy and it undermined his own feelings of obligation

towards his Conservative partners, not to rock the political boat with his own developing ideas.

Despite Chamberlain's radical views, the Unionist Government failed to get to grips with the social problems that were being identified during this period. The 1902 Education Act was the only piece of legislation in the period 1890–1905 that made a fundamental change in a major area of social policy.

Other reforms

The only other notable reform was introduced in 1897 in the form of a Workmen's Compensation Act that enabled workers injured at work to claim compensation from their employers. Even this was limited in that it did not apply to some important categories of workers such as agricultural labourers, seamen and domestic servants.

Chamberlain was committed to a much wider range of reforms to benefit the working classes and Salisbury was prepared to back him provided the reforms were not so radical as to be a serious threat to his party's unity. In particular, Chamberlain was keen to introduce a system of old age pensions, but despite much discussion nothing materialised. Chamberlain's failure can be explained as follows:

- He was increasingly convinced that social reforms on the scale he envisaged could only be funded through imperial development. He therefore believed that his main task was to focus on the Empire and to strengthen it politically and economically. It was for this reason that he had chosen to be Colonial Secretary in preference to the posts of Home Secretary or Chancellor of the Exchequer that Salisbury had offered him. Either of these offices would have made it much easier for Chamberlain to oversee social reform policies.
- Because Chamberlain was not in a government post that allowed him to focus directly on social reforms, the issues tended to be sidelined into committees in which those less enthusiastic about reform were able to delay things. For example, the question of old age pensions was referred to a commission of enquiry that made no progress other than to consider the probable expense.
- In 1899 the Boer War began and the mounting cost of this conflict meant that the costs of social reforms became the overriding issue.
- By the time the Boer War ended, Chamberlain had become totally convinced that social reform was dependent on the creation of wealth through the development of the Empire. This, he had come to believe, required an end to the policy of **free trade** which had been adopted in the middle years of the century and the reintroduction of **protective tariffs**. He left the government in 1903 to campaign for this programme and without him the Unionists lost all focus on social reform (see page 23).

Key question
What other reforms were pushed for in this period?

Key dates

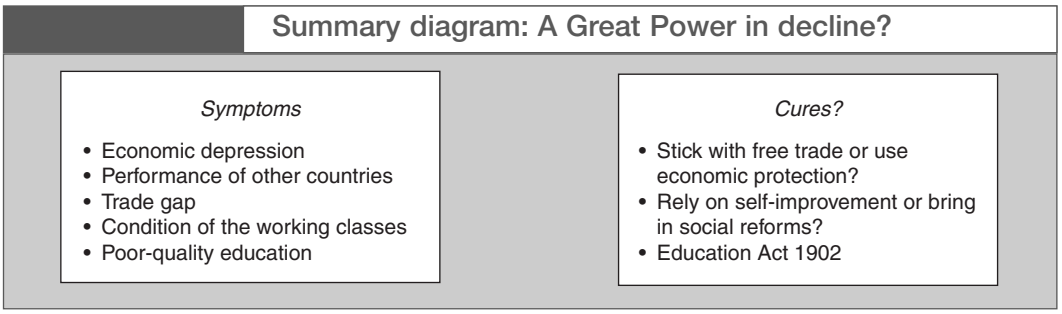
Workmen's Compensation Act: 1897

Boer War begins: 1899

Key terms

Free trade
An economic policy in which taxes are not applied (or only minimally applied) to imports and exports and no barriers are imposed on the import or export of goods.

Protective tariffs
Taxes on imports to make them more expensive and thus 'protect' domestic produce.



Key question
What was New Imperialism?

3 | New Imperialism

New Imperialism can be defined as the idea that the British Empire should be seen as an economic asset that needed to be properly managed and developed both politically and economically. It contrasted with the more conventional views of the role of the Empire:

- That it was a costly inconvenience – but needed for national prestige and Britain's image as a Great Power.
- That it provided a useful outlet for surplus population and investment.
- That it was a moral obligation carrying with it the duty to spread enlightened Christian civilisation to other peoples.

In contrast to these views there was an altogether more positive, enthusiastic and nationalistic approach that drew together various aspects of the more conventional ideas. The development of this New Imperialism can be traced back to the 1860s and the ideas of enthusiasts for empire such as the historian J.A. Froude and the radical liberal politician Sir Charles Dilke.

In 1868 Dilke published a book entitled *Greater Britain* in which he advocated the expansion and development of empire and emphasised the cultural ties that united the 'English-speaking peoples'. This was highly influential and sparked off a revival of interest in the Empire and the idea of imperial expansion.

The 1870s saw the start of a new phase of rapid expansion by the other European imperial powers, most notably the French. This saw a 'Scramble for Africa' in which large areas of the continent fell under European control. It was impossible for Britain to stand aloof from this and soon Britain's imperial possessions were outstripping all the other powers.

In 1876 the importance of India within the British Empire was marked by the creation of the title Empress of India to add to the titles of Queen Victoria. Though some cynics remarked that it was a title better suited to a railway locomotive, it was a sign that the Empire was being taken more seriously.

In the 1880s New Imperialism was given a further impetus by the work of J.R. Seeley, a Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University. Seeley delivered a series of lectures in 1881 entitled *The Expansion of England*. These were published as a

book in 1883. In this Seeley offered the classic statement that defined New Imperialism in the form of a question that proposed an awesome challenge for the future:

> Will the English race, which is divided by so many oceans, making full use of modern scientific inventions, devise some form of organisation like that of the United States, under which full liberty and solid union may be reconciled with unbounded territorial expansion?

This goal became the essential objective in the 1890s for those who increasingly came to believe that only through an integrated and developed empire could Britain maintain itself as a world power in the coming twentieth century. The greatest political figure to embrace the vision of New Imperialism was Joseph Chamberlain.

4 | The Boer War 1899–1902

Key question
Why did war break out in southern Africa in 1899?

The vision for Africa

Chamberlain became Colonial Secretary in 1895 with a mission to unify the Empire politically and integrate and develop it economically. Nowhere was there a greater challenge to his vision than in southern Africa. Britain had ruled the Cape Colony since taking it from Holland during the Napoleonic Wars. Under British control it had expanded in size and wealth and become a self-governing colony.

The Prime Minister of the Cape, Cecil Rhodes, like Chamberlain a self-made millionaire, had a vision of which Chamberlain approved. This was the expansion of British influence throughout Africa, linking the continent in an unbroken chain of territory from south to north. Standing in the way of this dream, however, were the states of Transvaal and Orange Free State that were settled by **Boers**. The Orange Free State was small and agriculturally based and in no way a threat to British domination of southern Africa. Transvaal, however, was a different proposition. The discovery of gold in the 1880s made it wealthy and attracted to it miners and engineers from all over the world.

Key term
Boers
Descendants of the original Dutch-speaking farmers who had first colonised the Cape and who had migrated north to escape the rule of the British. Boer in Dutch means farmer.

The Boer government of Transvaal welcomed its newly found wealth but feared the political impact of the influx of foreign workers and businessmen, many of whom were British. It passed laws to restrict the political rights of these workers and imposed heavier taxation on them. At the same time it set about arming itself and secretly forging links with the rising imperial power of Germany, which it saw as a possible protector against the British.

The first Boer War

There was already a history of hostility. In 1877, faced with the possibility of attack by an aggressive Zulu army, the Boers had agreed to be annexed into the British Empire. Once Britain had eliminated the Zulu threat by 1879, however, they reneged on their decision and reclaimed their independence. There was a

brief conflict in 1881–2, sometimes known as the first Boer War, after which Britain agreed to allow Transvaal to leave the Empire. This independence, however, was subject to the proviso that it should not engage in any relationships with foreign powers unless Britain had prior consultation and gave approval. The Boers agreed to this in 1884 in a settlement known as the London Convention.

The Jameson Raid

Key date
Jameson's Raid, attempting to overthrow the government of Transvaal, causes an international scandal: 1896

Rhodes was secretly determined that the Transvaal must be brought back under British control once and for all. In 1896 he hatched a plot to bring down the Transvaal government using the resources of the British South Africa Company, which he controlled and which had an armed police force at its disposal. Rhodes's brother Frank was to lead a revolt in Transvaal itself, while a senior figure in the Company, Dr Leander Jameson, led a force of men into Transvaal to 'restore order'.

The attempted *coup*, which became known as the 'Jameson Raid', was a fiasco:

- Jameson and Frank Rhodes were arrested.
- Cecil Rhodes was exposed as the instigator and had to resign as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony.
- Chamberlain himself was accused of complicity in the plot and had to endure a parliamentary inquiry that ultimately concluded that there was no evidence of his involvement.
- Worse still, the incident provoked a confrontation with Germany when Kaiser Wilhelm II sent a telegram to the Transvaal government congratulating it on defeating the *coup* without having to ask for help from Germany. The implication that Germany saw itself as free to intervene in such a matter forced the British Government to deploy the North Sea Fleet and ask for 'clarification' of the German position, which in diplomatic parlance, meant asking for an apology. The Germans did apologise but the incident soured relations and made Chamberlain and those who shared his New Imperialist vision even more determined to bring Transvaal to heel.

Declaration of war

Between 1896 and 1899 discussions continued between the British Government and the Boer Government of Transvaal over the position of British workers who were denied full political rights in Transvaal. Chamberlain did not help the cause of compromise by appointing Lord Milner, a hard-line imperialist, to the key post of High Commissioner of the Cape, effectively the British Government's representative. Milner was not interested in a settlement unless it was one dictated on British terms.

By late 1899 relations had deteriorated to the point where both sides expected a conflict at any moment. It was the Boers who lost their nerve first. In October 1899 President Paul Kruger of the Transvaal declared war on Britain and launched immediate strikes into British territory in the hope of securing a quick

victory. It was precisely the miscalculation Chamberlain, Milner and the advocates of New Imperialism had been waiting for.

Initial setbacks

Key question
What problems arose for Britain during the course of the war?

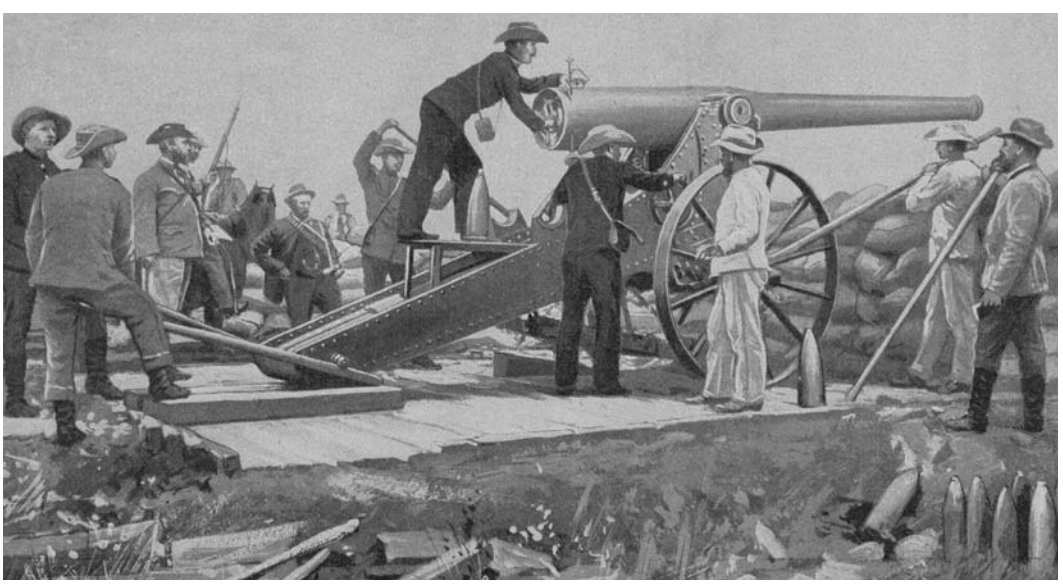
Initially the war went badly for Britain. Despite the fact that the Boers had struck first, most world opinion outside the Empire was united in seeing Britain as the true aggressor against a small nation. Even within Britain there was a vocal minority in the Liberal Party that opposed the war and became known as 'pro-Boers' for their trouble.

Not only that, but the military conflict itself was a disaster for Britain in the first months of the war as inadequacies in military organisation, combined with Boer determination and ruthlessness, produced a series of defeats. The Boer forces surrounded the towns of Ladysmith and Mafeking and laid sieges. However, these were eventually raised by the British Army as their superior resources in terms of manpower and weapons started to have an effect. By the end of 1900 it was clear that the initial British military difficulties were over and that the Boers would be defeated.

British victory

Key date
British victory in the Boer War: 1902

Eventual and inevitable British victory came in 1902. However, the manner of the victory left a sour taste. Facing defeat in the form of overwhelming numbers and resources the Boers resorted to hit-and-run guerrilla tactics to resist. To combat this the British resorted to rounding up Boer civilian non-combatants and 'concentrating' them in large camps. The motives for this were not entirely without credit. The principal consideration was to deprive the guerrilla fighters of bases in their home to which they could return to rest and regroup.



The siege of Ladysmith 1899.

Key term

'Scorched earth' policy
A military tactic in which buildings, crops, livestock, factories, etc. are destroyed in order to deprive the opposition of resources.

Removing the civilians made it possible to adopt a **'scorched earth' policy** to counter guerrilla warfare. This was the only policy that could be made effective as a counter to the Boer tactics. Also it was assumed that bringing the Boer women, children and elderly men into a protected environment would reduce the risk of civilian casualties. The policy, however, went disastrously wrong. There was a total failure on the part of the military authorities to understand the requirements of such camps in terms of food, sanitation and medical provision. The result was that diseases such as typhus and cholera spread like wildfire in the camps, bringing thousands of deaths. The British press ran a critical campaign exposing the camps, and the fate of Boer civilians in them became a national and international scandal.

When the war ended in 1902 there was relatively little sense of national euphoria, rather a sense of relief. The war had been costly, embarrassing and divisive. There was strong feeling that the peace settlement needed to be one on which a better basis of Anglo-Boer relations could be built in the future. The Peace of Vereeniging of 1902 reflected this desire. Under its terms Transvaal and Orange Free State were absorbed into the British Empire but with promise of self-government (made good in 1907) and with generous provisions for reparations from Britain to help repair the damage done by the war.

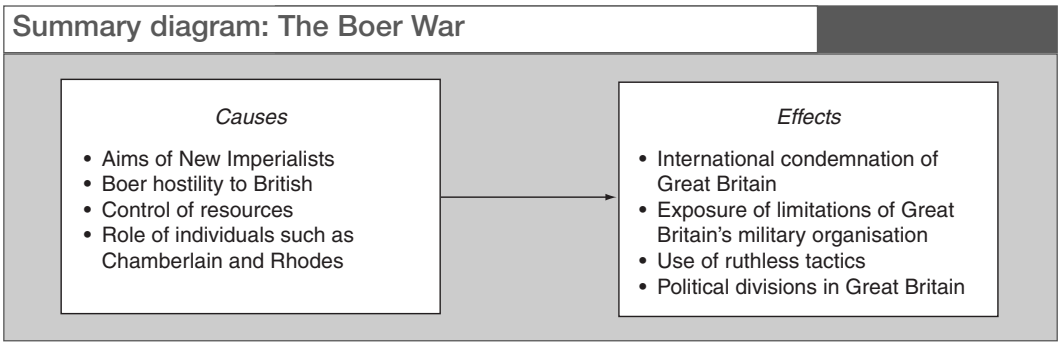
Key question
What were the political effects of the Boer War?

Impact of the war

For New Imperialism the experience of the Boer War was mixed. On the one hand the military problems of the early stages of the war had raised doubts about Britain's status as a military power. The political divisions at home and the moral scandal of the camps had combined to put imperialism in a poor light. However, on the positive side, the Empire had pulled together to meet and resolve the crisis. The victorious war effort had been based on the use of volunteers from Britain and other parts of the Empire. The peace was generous and had the effect of reconciling at least some Boers to the prospect of permanent membership of the Empire.

In 1910, Transvaal and Orange Free State were sufficiently pro-British to agree to become members of a new Union of South Africa, which brought them together with the British-dominated areas of the Cape and Natal. In 1914, South Africa joined in the war against Germany. One former Boer General, Jan Smuts, even joined the Imperial War Cabinet in London in 1917.

Even so, on the central New Imperialist issues of closer economic and political integration, no real progress was made. Chamberlain's campaign for tariff reform (see pages 21–3) split the Unionists and helped reunite the Liberals after their divided response to the Boer War. In the 1906 general election it was the Liberals and Labour, with their continued support for cheaper food through free trade, who convinced the voters rather than the Unionist case that the future lay with developing the Empire through economic protection.



5 | The Decline of the Unionists

Key question
What caused the Unionists to decline in influence as a political force?

Key date
Queen Victoria dies: 1901

In September 1902 Lord Salisbury retired from the premiership and was succeeded by Arthur Balfour. The death of Queen Victoria in January 1901 had released him from continuing in an office that he had come to regard as an intolerable burden. A sense of duty compelled him to remain at his post while the Boer War continued and until the new king had been crowned, but once the coronation had been held he gratefully relinquished office.

There was no question of a struggle for the succession. The only conceivable alternative to Balfour was Chamberlain and the latter knew perfectly well that he was not acceptable, as leader, to most of the Conservatives. Chamberlain accepted this situation realistically and never made any attempt to intervene, despite some press efforts to stir up a campaign on his behalf. His acceptance of Balfour, however, did not mean that he was satisfied with the state of affairs within the Unionist Government.

Chamberlain's dissatisfaction

Chamberlain's dissatisfaction stemmed from a variety of frustrations in his political life:

- He wanted to be Prime Minister but he knew that there was almost no prospect of this happening.
- Increasingly he felt that the government's lack of achievements in social policy was undermining his credibility and playing into the hands of the socialists.
- He was worried at the lack of progress, as he saw it, in ending British isolation in foreign policy (see page 141).
- Most of all, he was frustrated at the lack of progress that his plans for the unification of the Empire were making.

Since 1897 Chamberlain had made repeated efforts to advance the idea of an **imperial federation** based initially on economic union between the different countries of the Empire. So far, however, all his efforts to interest the Prime Ministers of the various countries of the Empire had failed. To Chamberlain this spelled disaster for both the Empire and the United Kingdom. He firmly believed that the future lay with large countries,

Key term
Imperial federation The principle of joining several self-governing territories within the Empire into a union of equals.

possessed of large populations with access to vast natural resources. For Britain to compete with the likes of the USA and Germany there was, according to Chamberlain's analysis, no alternative but the unification of the Empire or a decline to minor international status.

By 1902 Chamberlain was little short of desperate for a political initiative. The 'triumph' of the Boer War – 'Joe's War' as it was often called – had turned sour; the Education Bill was an acute embarrassment; Chamberlain became determined to embark upon a major scheme that would seize the public's imagination, rescue Unionism from the doldrums and, ultimately, capture opinion throughout the Empire for a great imperial cause.

Chamberlain and tariff reform

For many years Chamberlain had been privately dubious about the wisdom of the United Kingdom's policy of free trade in a world that was increasingly turning to economic protection. It was not, it should be emphasised, that he was personally a protectionist in outlook. On the contrary, he hoped that international free trade could be restored. For the time being, however, he had come to the conclusion that British industry demanded protection in order to give it a breathing space from the cheap imports of government-subsidised producers abroad. The money raised from import tariffs, he believed, could be used to fund social reforms, as well as to assist the modernisation of British industry.

Key term

Imperial unification Bringing the 'mother' country (Britain) into closer economic and political unity with dominions and colonies.

Such a policy was politically dangerous. Taxing imports meant a certain rise in food prices, since so much of the food consumed in Britain came from overseas; this in turn meant:

- it would be difficult to sell the idea to the working classes
- it would unite the Liberals in ferocious opposition
- it risked dividing the Unionists.

On the other hand, it offered almost the last chance for developing **imperial unification** as imperial trade could be exempted from taxation or subjected to reduced rates under an imperial preference tariff system.

Key question

What was the reaction to the idea of tariff reform?

Division over tariff reform

Whatever the risks, Chamberlain was not the man to shirk a challenge when such a prize was at stake. As early as May 1902 he hinted at the idea of an imperial trading system in a speech in his political stronghold, Birmingham. The government had just been forced to introduce a small tariff on imported corn to help pay for the costs of the Boer War and had been censured for doing so. In defending this tariff, Chamberlain hoped to undermine the inviolability of free trade, which he saw as outdated.

This speech occurred just before a Colonial Conference at which Chamberlain failed to convince the visiting Prime Ministers of the case for greater imperial integration. In the autumn of 1902 he left on a tour of South Africa that turned out to be a considerable success. Returning in early 1903 Chamberlain

prepared himself for the launching of his great crusade. In May 1903, once more in Birmingham, he made a momentous speech that unquestionably changed the course of politics in the years up to the First World War. He declared himself in favour of an imperial preference tariff system designed to bring about an economic integration of the Empire. This speech initiated a debate that split the Unionists as a whole, with both the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists groups internally divided over their response.

Balfour attempted to preserve unity by adopting a fence-sitting strategy: he did not wish to break with Chamberlain and his supporters (who now, after all, included mainstream Conservatives) but, on the other hand, he was personally unconvinced of the case for 'tariff reform'. In any case, his main priority was party unity. While Balfour was using all his political skills (which were not inconsiderable) to keep the Unionists together, the opposing groups were formalising their positions:

- Chamberlain headed a Tariff Reform League set up in 1903.
- The free trade unionists formed the Unionist Free Food League in the same year.
- Some Unionists, including the young Winston Churchill, decided to defect to the Liberals. The following cartoon reflects the nature of the opposition to the idea of abandoning the principle of free trade.

'Through the Birmingham Looking Glass', *Westminster Gazette*, 6 October 1903. In what ways does the cartoon present an unsympathetic view of the tariff reform campaign? How would a supporter of tariff reform have countered the charges made in the cartoon? How fully does the cartoon contribute to an understanding of the issues raised in the tariff reform campaign?

Key question
How did the eventual defeat of the Unionists come about?

Key dates

Balfour resigns and the king appoints the Liberal leader, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, as Prime Minister: 1905

The Liberal Party wins a massive victory in the general election: 1906

Defeat of the Unionists

In September 1903, Chamberlain resigned from the government in order to carry on a full-time campaign for tariff reform in the country at large. Leading free traders in the Cabinet also resigned, including the Duke of Devonshire.

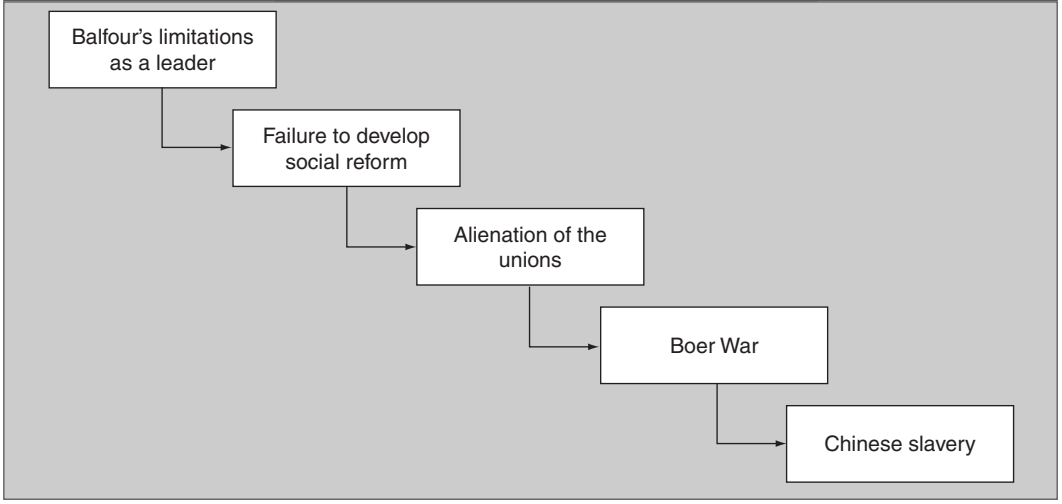
Balfour's weakened administration limped on unconvincingly until the end of 1905, when, following an unexpectedly good showing in a by-election Balfour decided to resign without asking for a general election. Balfour's decision was a reaction to the confused political situation. Chamberlain's campaign had gained considerable ground within the ranks of the Unionists, but it had stalled badly in the country. The trade unions were hostile and there was no evidence to suggest that Chamberlain was converting the nation as a whole to his grand vision. Thus the Unionists remained divided, with no real prospect of resolving their differences, while the Liberals had a clear and united opposition to tariff reform that seemed to be in tune with public opinion.

In these circumstances Balfour realised that to continue in office much longer, with a general election due no later than the summer of 1907, would be fatal. In November 1905, two of the Liberal leaders, Campbell-Bannerman and Lord Rosebery, crossed swords publicly over the issue of Irish Home Rule (see page 34), which Rosebery wished to renounce. Balfour hoped that, by forcing the Liberals to take office, he would expose their internal divisions (not the least of these being over who would actually lead a Liberal administration), and divert attention from the Unionists' own difficulties. The strategy failed. The Liberals were by no means as divided as they appeared. Rosebery had little or no personal support in the party and Campbell-Bannerman had no real difficulty in forming a government. He was then able to call a general election for January 1906 from a position of strength.

A new scandal in South Africa concerning the terrible conditions suffered by Chinese immigrant workers helped to complete the Liberal's campaign. 'Chinese slavery', as the press dubbed it, had little to do with Balfour's administration, but it helped reawaken the scandal of the 'concentration camps' into which Boer civilians had been herded in the recent war, and enabled the Liberals to portray the Unionists as exploiters of the workers.

The result was an election triumph for the Liberals on a totally unexpected scale. They won 400 seats; the Unionists were reduced to a mere 157, some two-thirds of whom were 'Chamberlainite' tariff reformers. Balfour himself lost his seat and suffered the indignity of having to fight a further contest at a by-election to get back into the House of Commons. The overall result meant that the Liberals had a clear majority of 130. With the support of the Irish and Labour contingents (see pages 35–7) this would rise to over 350. The Unionist catastrophe was complete and could scarcely have been more humiliating.

Summary diagram: The decline of the Unionists



Study Guide: AS Questions

In the style of AQA

(a) Explain why the impact of the Boer War increased opposition to the Conservative government between 1902 and 1905. (12 marks)

(b) 'Tariff reform was the most important issue leading to the disintegration of Balfour's leadership by 1905.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. (24 marks)

Exam tips

The cross-references are intended to take you straight to the material that will help you to answer the questions.

(a) This question requires explanation of a range of reasons focused on opposition to the Conservatives. You do not need to provide details of the Boer War but should look closely at its impact in Britain as considered on pages 18–19. You should also look ahead to page 44 where problems stemming from recruitment are explained. Don't forget that you will need to order and prioritise between factors to reach an overall judgement.

(b) To provide a balanced answer you will need to examine both tariff reform and other factors that undermined Balfour's leadership. Tariff reform is discussed on pages 21–2 and you should identify its contribution to party splits. On page 23 you will find references to Irish Unionism and 'Chinese slavery', both of which were also relevant to the collapse of Balfour's leadership, but don't forget to make reference to the broader factors of economic decline, social concerns, the Education Act and the Boer War, all of which indirectly contributed. Your answer should be argued throughout and should lead naturally to a well-supported conclusion.

2 The Liberal Party and 'New Liberalism' 1890–1906

POINTS TO CONSIDER

The period 1890–1906 was a time of significant change and development for the Liberal Party. With the retirement of its greatest figure, Gladstone, in 1894 the Party entered a period of internal division and electoral decline.

The Liberals were crushed in two general elections in 1895 and 1900. However, by 1906 they had recovered dramatically to record their own electoral triumph, form one of the strongest governments in British political history and go on to dominate government into the First World War. This chapter looks at:

- The origins of the Party and how this created tensions and the potential for division
- The emergence of a New Liberalism
- The problems that developed over Party leadership
- The reasons for the 1906 general election triumph

Key dates

1859	Foundation of the modern Liberal Party
1886	Home Rule Bill for Ireland defeated in the House of Commons
1887	Joseph Chamberlain and the Liberal Unionists begin their collaboration with the Conservatives
1892	Gladstone forms his final Liberal government
1893	Home Rule is defeated in the House of Lords
1894	Gladstone resigns Lord Rosebery becomes new Prime Minister
1895	Liberals are heavily defeated in the general election by an alliance of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists
1900	Conservative or 'Unionist' domination is continued in the so-called 'Khaki' election
1905	Prime Minister Balfour resigns The Liberal leader, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, becomes Prime Minister
1906	The Liberal Party wins the general election by a massive majority

Key question
How did the Liberal Party come to be an established force in British politics in the nineteenth century?

1 | The Origins of the Liberal Party

The Liberal Party in 1890 was a broad-based **coalition** of diverse groups that had formally come together as the 'Liberal Party' in 1859. Because the Party had such diverse origins there was no detailed set of principles that could be said to make up 'liberalism'.

Indeed the lack of a very precise ideology was almost a necessity given the scope of views that the party needed to accommodate. The Liberal Party was formed in 1859 as a result of public interest in the issue of the unification of Italy, which had been taking shape during the 1850s in opposition to domination by the Austrian Empire. The Conservatives were broadly opposed to national movements threatening the status quo in Europe.

At this time, nationalists seeking freedom from the imperial powers of Austria, Russia and Turkey attracted support from 'liberals' all over Europe. This was because those imperial powers were **autocracies** without any form of representative government accountable to the people – or at least a part of the people. In 1859 as the movement for Italian unification entered a crucial phase, liberals in Britain decided to come together to express their support for a government that would in turn support the cause of Italian nationalists.

The five groups that came together to form the Liberal Party were the whigs, the Peelites, Independent Radicals, the Nonconformists and the Chartists.

Key terms

Coalition
A coming together of different groups or political parties. Many countries are governed by coalition governments but it is unusual in Britain.

Autocracy
A system where one person has absolute rule.

Great Reform Act
An act that set standard voting qualifications in rural and urban constituencies, increasing numbers of voters from around 450,000 to 700,000.

Progressive
Prepared to introduce reform.

Corn Laws
Laws originally introduced in 1815 to tax cereal products coming into the country in order to protect domestic farmers from foreign competition.

The 'Whig' Party

This had been the dominant party of government since the **Great Reform Act** of 1832. Although seen generally as more **progressive** in attitude than the Conservatives, its leadership contained many aristocratic elements drawn from some of the oldest families in the country. So although it had been associated with important reforms in the past it was nevertheless basically traditional and even 'conservative' in outlook.

The 'Peelites'

The Peelites were supporters of Sir Robert Peel, who had headed a great Conservative Reforming Ministry from 1841 to 1846. Peel had reduced taxes on imports and exports drastically and had introduced the first peacetime income tax. Finally in 1846 he introduced the repeal of the **Corn Laws** that protected domestic farmers from foreign competition. These policies had led to a split in the Conservative Party that caused Peel's government to fall after the passing of the repeal of the Corn Laws. Peel died in 1850, but his supporters continued to maintain a separate identity. The most important of the Peelites was Gladstone, who was to become the most important single influence on the development of the Party up to 1895.

The 'Independent Radicals'

This was a very loosely co-operating group with no real structure or agenda. Essentially it was a group of individuals, with a very general set of radical ideas. They did not always agree about specific issues or about supporting the government of the day. Their identity as a group was mainly based on the fact that they did not fit with the other main parties.

The 'Nonconformists'

Nonconformists were members of those Churches that were protestant but not prepared to accept the control of the Anglican Church. They broadly supported Whigs or Radicals in elections because they were less identified with maintaining the privileges of the Anglican Church as the 'established' or state Church. There were a great many of them in Scotland, Wales and parts of the Midlands, although they were to be found all over the country in lesser numbers. Nonconformists belonged to different Churches and did not agree with each other on all issues, although they all tended to be highly critical of Roman Catholicism. Nor were they exclusively anti-Conservative. In particular, in some areas, the Presbyterians, who were exceptionally anti-Roman Catholic, were also very strong supporters of the Conservatives.

The 'Chartists'

The Chartists were a radical group of the 1830s and 1840s that campaigned for working-class political rights. They took their name from the 'People's Charter' of 1839, which set out their demands. Although largely led by middle-class radicals, they attracted the active support of more educated younger elements among the working classes. Chartism collapsed as a national movement at the end of the 1840s but historians have always stressed that the real strength of Chartism lay in its local organisations. More recently historians have increasingly argued that Chartist identity did remain a factor in politics, especially at local level, well beyond the period of its zenith. Eventually many Chartists gravitated towards the Liberal Party.

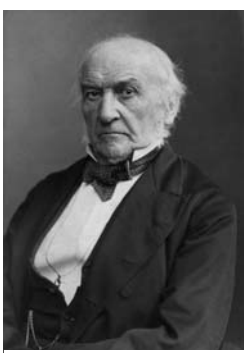
The sheer diversity of the groups that made up the Liberal Party meant that the leaders had to tread a very careful path if they were not to end up offending one or other group. The clearest example of this was to be the issue of Irish Home Rule, championed by Gladstone in the 1880s. This policy upset some of the aristocratic Whigs who sympathised with the Anglican landowners in Ireland and radical Nonconformists who resented concessions to Roman Catholics.

Key question
What were the factors behind the emergence of New Liberalism?

2 | New Liberalism

New Liberalism arose out of radical opposition to the direction that the Liberal Party was taking in the 1880s. The radicals in the Liberal Party had always disliked the aristocratic nature of most of the leadership. By the 1880s most of the **Old Whigs** were dead and the new generation lacked real commitment to radical reform. Even Gladstone, who had been seen by many as the radicals' main hope in the 1860s, was clearly not a radical when it came to social reform.

Key term
Old Whig
Those Liberals who had originally been part of the Whig Party, itself of aristocratic background.



William Gladstone

Gladstone's beliefs

Gladstone basically believed that progress was achieved by self-improvement and individual effort. He did not believe that governments should intervene directly to help individuals by such methods as providing state pensions for the elderly or helping children from poorer families.

Gladstone's political philosophy emphasised the personal responsibility of the individual. Gladstone's beliefs can be summed up as follows:

- Individuals should be allowed as much personal freedom as possible.
- Business and the economic sector generally should be free from government interference and face the minimum of taxation burdens.
- The government should only intervene where there was a clear moral principle to be defended or promoted. For example, he came to accept that employers had responsibilities towards those they employed, especially women and children.
- Artificial barriers against self-improvement – for example social barriers – needed to be removed so that people of 'merit' could rise by their own efforts.

These ideas were essentially very conservative, 'Peelite' principles.

Gladstone became more liberal, as he grew older, on issues such as the right to vote and greater toleration of religious differences. However, even on these matters there was a limit to his liberalism. It never occurred to Gladstone, for example, that all men might have an inherent right to vote – he assumed that this right had to be earned by demonstrating virtues of education and civilised behaviour.

When it came to religion, Gladstone did gradually accept that other Christian denominations than the Anglican Church should have rights and should not be discriminated against. However, he still believed that the Anglican Church was morally superior and only agreed very reluctantly in the 1870s to accept the idea that non-Anglicans should be allowed into teaching posts at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, from which they had previously been barred by the universities' regulations.

But, while he was prepared to introduce limited reforms on these issues, he remained very suspicious of any idea that the state should intervene directly in areas he saw as personal or

family responsibilities. For example, he hated the idea of compulsory state education and was suspicious even of any state involvement in education, although he at times agreed to reforms in education at the prompting of his Cabinet colleagues.

The Unauthorised Programme

Gladstone's conservatism on social issues was frustrating for those liberals who had more radical instincts. In 1885, the leading radical, Joseph Chamberlain (see profile in Chapter 1, pages 12–13), decided to address the issue head on by presenting his own set of proposals for a future Liberal Government to introduce:

- The abolition of all school fees for elementary education.
- Compulsory land purchase to create allotments and smallholdings for the rural lower classes.
- A graduated property tax so that government could impose higher taxes on the rich to pay for government spending.
- Reform of the House of Lords and shorter parliaments (three years maximum instead of seven), to make government more accountable.
- **Disestablishment** of the Church of England to put it on the same legal basis as other Churches.

Key term

Disestablishment The principle of separating the Church of England from its legal connection with the Constitution.

This set of proposals became known as the 'Unauthorised Programme' because it was not the official policy of the Liberal Party. Gladstone did not approve of it, but as he could see the potential popularity of the ideas with lower class voters he did not openly condemn it. The Unauthorised Programme brought together ideas that had been discussed in radical circles for some time and in many ways represented the start of the clear challenge of 'New Liberalism' to the conservatism of Gladstone and his supporters.

The Newcastle Programme

Key date

Home Rule bill for Ireland defeated in the House of Commons: 1886

In 1886 the clash in the Party over Home Rule for Ireland resulted in Chamberlain leaving the Liberals. However, not all radicals were prepared to take this extreme step and, in 1891, with an election looming, Gladstone was forced to accept a Liberal manifesto that offered a wider range of reforms than he would have liked in order to ensure party unity.

The manifesto became known as the 'Newcastle Programme' because Gladstone announced it in a speech in Newcastle upon Tyne. The Programme was hastily put together but bore the clear imprint of 'New Liberal' influence:

- Home Rule was top of the agenda – at Gladstone's insistence.
- Compulsory land purchase for allotments as in the Unauthorised Programme (the end of school fees had already been brought in by the Conservatives in 1891).
- Tougher regulations controlling health and safety in the workplace.
- Greater employer liability for accidents at work.
- More limitations on the length of the working day.

- There were also references to greater democracy – 'one man, one vote', reform of the House of Lords, more democratic local government and payment for MPs to allow access to the House of Commons for a wider social range.

Gladstone accepted the package mainly because he had no intention whatsoever of putting it into effect. His principal concern was to achieve Home Rule for Ireland. He was 82. He intended to secure Home Rule and then retire immediately. He had no sympathy with the ideas behind the Newcastle Programme at all.

Beyond these kinds of ideas, however, 'New Liberalism' was breaking into areas that were the stuff of nightmares for Gladstone. The following policy ideas were all being discussed as remedies for the social problems that were increasingly evident:

- Pensions for the elderly.
- State-funded sickness benefits for those suffering from illness or injury.
- A national unemployment scheme.
- Payments to help working-class families support their children.

The adoption of similar schemes in Germany in the 1880s only served to increase the sense of urgency. In addition the so-called 'Socialist Revival' of the 1880s (see page 85) saw various groups spring into existence championing the cause of the working classes. These groups insisted that working-class interests could never be properly advanced through the Liberal Party, with its connections to the upper classes and the world of business and commerce.

For the New Liberals the emergence of groups that aimed to win over the increasing numbers of male working-class voters meant that there was an urgent need to show that the Liberals could in fact offer a meaningful package of reform proposals to address working-class interests.

Summary diagram: What was Liberalism?

Traditional Liberalism

- Minimum government intervention
- Strict control of government spending
- Minimum taxation
- Emphasis on individual responsibility

New Liberalism

- Greater government intervention
- Increased government spending on social reform
- Increased personal taxation for the wealthier classes
- More emphasis on collective responsibility

3 | The Leadership Question

Key question
How serious was the problem of the leadership succession?

When Gladstone finally retired as Prime Minister and Leader of the Liberal Party in 1894, there was no clear successor commanding universal support in the party. Gladstone had been such an awesomely dominant leader that it had seemed almost impertinent to many in the party to appear to be positioning to replace him.

In the 1880s the radical Joseph Chamberlain had been the most prominent of the Liberal leaders apart from Gladstone himself. However, Chamberlain had as many enemies as friends within the party and his disagreement with the 'Grand Old Man' over Irish Home Rule had led him to quit the party with a group of 'Liberal Unionists'. By 1894 this group had all but merged with the Conservatives and the following year joined them in a coalition government in which Chamberlain became Colonial Secretary and the acknowledged number two to the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury. This left a group of younger Liberals vying to emerge as the successor to Gladstone.

Key dates

Joseph Chamberlain and the Liberal Unionists begin their collaboration with the Conservatives: 1887

Gladstone resigns: 1894

Lord Rosebery becomes Prime Minister: 1894

Liberals are heavily defeated in the General Election by an alliance of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists: 1895

Lord Rosebery

In terms of social status he was the most prominent figure in the Party. He was also intellectually brilliant and an expert on foreign policy. He had been Foreign Secretary under Gladstone and succeeded him as Prime Minister in 1894. Despite this, and the fact that he was still relatively young at 47, he was not by any means certain to be the long-term successor. His interest in politics was erratic and he was a leader who intended to lead very much on his own terms. After the election victory of the Conservatives (Unionists) in 1895 he became less active in his participation in the debates in the House of Lords. In 1896 he announced that he was resigning the leadership of the party. As a peer, he was not much favoured by the radical wing of the party in the House of Commons. He could also be extremely difficult to work with in government. Even so Rosebery remained a prominent figure and refused to rule out a comeback.

Herbert Henry Asquith

Asquith was widely regarded as one of the more radical of the leading figures. He was a prominent barrister and one of the most gifted of the younger Liberals. His marriage into an aristocratic family had given him useful social connections. He came from Yorkshire rather than the Home Counties and from a Nonconformist background, which made him popular with the radicals. Barely 40 years old when Gladstone made him Home Secretary in 1892, Asquith looked certain to be leader eventually. However, Asquith had an expensive wife and could not afford to give up his high earnings as a barrister for full-time political activity unless he had the cushion of a ministerial salary and expenses, so for the time being he was prepared to wait.

Sir William Harcourt

Harcourt was Gladstone's Chancellor of the Exchequer and he led the Party following Rosebery's resignation. In many ways he was the most natural successor to Gladstone. He was a veteran politician, 67 years old in 1894, and easily the most experienced of Gladstone's colleagues. His views were very much in line with those of the great man. Harcourt was widely respected as a formidable performer in the House of Commons. However, he disliked party intrigues and was not well suited to inspiring unity in a party that was made up of so many factions, who could all so easily end up fighting each other rather than the opposition. He was also undermined by Rosebery, who, though he himself did not wish to lead, was resentful towards those who did. Harcourt resigned in 1898, and retired from active politics, fed up with the in-fighting and divisions in the party.

Sir Edward Grey

Grey was even younger than Asquith, only 32 at the time of Gladstone's retirement in 1894. Even so he had staked a claim to be considered as a future leader. He had been Rosebery's second in command at the Foreign Office and, with the Foreign Secretary in the House of Lords, had had to take the lead on foreign policy matters on behalf of the government in the House of Commons. He had done very well in this role. He was, however, a close associate of Asquith and was unlikely to contest the leadership with him.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman

Campbell-Bannerman was, apart from Harcourt, the oldest and most experienced of the Liberal leaders. He was Gladstone's Secretary of State for War (what would now be termed Defence Secretary) and had previously been Irish Secretary. When Harcourt resigned in 1898 the leadership fell to Campbell-Bannerman almost automatically. He was already 62 by then and not in the best of health. He was a Liberal who had, unusually, become more radical as he had grown older. He did not command wide enthusiasm in the party but equally he had no real enemies or groups opposed to him. His age and poor health meant that he was no threat in the long term to the younger contenders. In many ways therefore he was the ideal leader for the time being.

To outsiders, the continually changing leadership and the lack of a really dominating successor to Gladstone seemed to suggest a party with a leadership crisis. In reality however the situation was less critical than it appeared. By 1900 all the main figures of the Party, apart from Rosebery, had accepted Campbell-Bannerman's leadership. To outsiders, Rosebery, as a former Prime Minister and still relatively young man, seemed to be still a formidable figure, but within the Party most people had lost patience with his posturing, inconsistencies and selfish manner. The younger potential leaders, most critically Asquith, were content, for a variety of reasons, to bide their time. Most important of all, the

leading Liberals were well aware that they could not afford to allow disputes over the leadership to affect their ability to form a government if the opportunity ever arose.

Summary diagram: Liberal leaders

1868–75	William Gladstone
1875–80	Lord Granville (Lords) and Lord Hartington (Commons)*†
1880–94	William Gladstone
1894–6	Lord Roseberg
1896–8	Sir William Harcourt
1898–1906	Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman

*Lord Hartington was not a peer but an MP. His father was the Duke of Devonshire. It was, and still is, usual for the sons of peers to use any lesser title of the family – in this case 'Marquis of Hartington'.

†It was not unusual for there to be separate leaders of a party in the Commons and Lords when a party was in opposition.

4 | The General Election of 1906

Key question
How did the Liberal Party achieve its landslide victory of 1906?

Key dates
- Prime Minister Balfour resigns: 1905
- The Liberal leader, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, becomes Prime Minister: 1905
- The Liberal Party wins the general election by a massive majority: 1906

On 4 December 1905 Arthur Balfour resigned as Prime Minister and brought to an end the coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists that had held power since 1895. Balfour refused, however, to advise the king to dissolve Parliament and hold a general election. Constitutionally this meant that the king had to send for the official Liberal leader, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and invite him to form a new government. This was part of Balfour's strategy. He hoped to provoke a crisis in the Liberal Party that would weaken it and allow him, eventually, to win another general election for the Unionists. Why did Balfour resort to such a complicated strategy?

- Campbell-Bannerman and the former Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, had clashed publicly in November 1905 over the issue of Irish Home Rule. Rosebery wanted to abandon it as a Liberal policy – Campbell-Bannerman intended to retain it.
- Campbell-Bannerman's position as leader appeared insecure. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey were possible alternatives, as was Lord Rosebery himself. Although they had accepted his leadership in opposition, Balfour was by no means certain that they would do so in government. There was a doubt therefore as to whether Campbell-Bannerman would actually be able to form a government, especially since it was known that his

health was fragile. If the Liberals failed in the attempt, the Unionist position would be massively strengthened.
- The Unionists had been, according to all the political commentators of the day, heading for a serious defeat at the next election, which would have to be held, at the latest, by the middle of 1907. They had however done better than expected in two by-elections in November 1905. This encouraged Balfour to think that perhaps the tide had turned and a bold strike to undermine the Liberals' credibility might swing electoral opinion back towards the Unionists.

The Liberals form government

Balfour's strategy was too subtle for its own good, however. The Liberals were by no means as divided as they had appeared. Campbell-Bannerman had no real problems forming a government. Neither Asquith nor Grey was prepared to put at risk the chance of holding high office, especially when 'C-B' was over 70 and not in good health. Asquith accepted the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer and Grey became Foreign Secretary. Lord Rosebery had little or no personal support by now in the Liberal Party and his eventual refusal to serve in the Liberal Government was no surprise. Once the government was formed, Campbell-Bannerman immediately asked the king to dissolve Parliament so that a general election could be held in January 1906. The result was a landslide victory for the Liberals of epic proportions. The Unionist dominance was totally overturned (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Seats in the House of Commons after the 1900 and 1906 elections

1900		*1906*	
Unionists	402	Unionists	157
Liberals	186	Liberals	400
LRC/Labour	2	LRC/Labour	52*
Irish National Party	82	Irish National Party	83

* Made up of 29 Labour Representation Committee (LRC) MPs who were joined by 21 Miners' Union MPs and two Independent Labour MPs after the election to form the Labour Party.

Key question
Why did the Unionists suffer such a humiliating defeat?

The defeat of the Unionists

There is no single factor to explain the catastrophe that befell the Unionists in 1906. Instead, a number of factors worked together to undermine them both internally and how they appeared to the electorate:

- The Unionists had become seen as the party of imperialism. This, after the scandal of the Boer War 'concentration camps' (see pages 18–19), was a liability rather than an asset.
- The Unionists were seriously divided over economic policy. Some supported the continuance of free trade, while others increasingly wanted to adopt a system of protective tariffs as

advocated by Joseph Chamberlain. Many historians see this as a critical factor because abandoning free trade meant taxing food imports, which would put up food prices.
- The Education Act of 1902 (see pages 10–14) had reunited many Nonconformist voters behind the Liberals.
- Trade unionists were particularly active and well organised – some in support of the Liberals and some in support of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) – because of the 1901 Taff Vale case (see Chapter 5, pages 88–9).
- The Unionists had failed, despite much discussion, to produce social reform legislation in key areas, such as child welfare, unemployment and sickness benefits and old age pensions.
- Balfour, despite being a superb analyst with considerable intellectual and administrative skills, was a poor leader. He had little feel for mass issues and could be very indecisive, for example, over the issue of protective tariffs where he failed to give a clear lead.
- In 1903 the Liberals agreed on a secret 'electoral pact' with the LRC. Under its terms the Liberals agreed not to put up candidates in some seats where the LRC had the better chance of winning. The LRC agreed to reciprocate in other seats where the Liberals were stronger. The arrangements centred on those constituencies where the Unionists might possibly win the seat in the event of a split vote between the Liberals and the LRC. It was not a binding commitment and it worked through an informal, personal agreement reached by Herbert Gladstone for the Liberals, and Ramsay MacDonald for the LRC. Even so, this arrangement enabled the LRC to achieve its electoral breakthrough and also secured a number of otherwise **marginal seats** for the Liberals.
- Finally, a scandal erupted in South Africa over the terrible working conditions being endured by Chinese contract workers in the South African mines. The scandal, described as 'Chinese slavery' by the press, reinforced the image of the Unionists as the uncaring party of worker exploitation, even though, in reality, they had no responsibility for, or ability to change, the conditions of the Chinese workers.

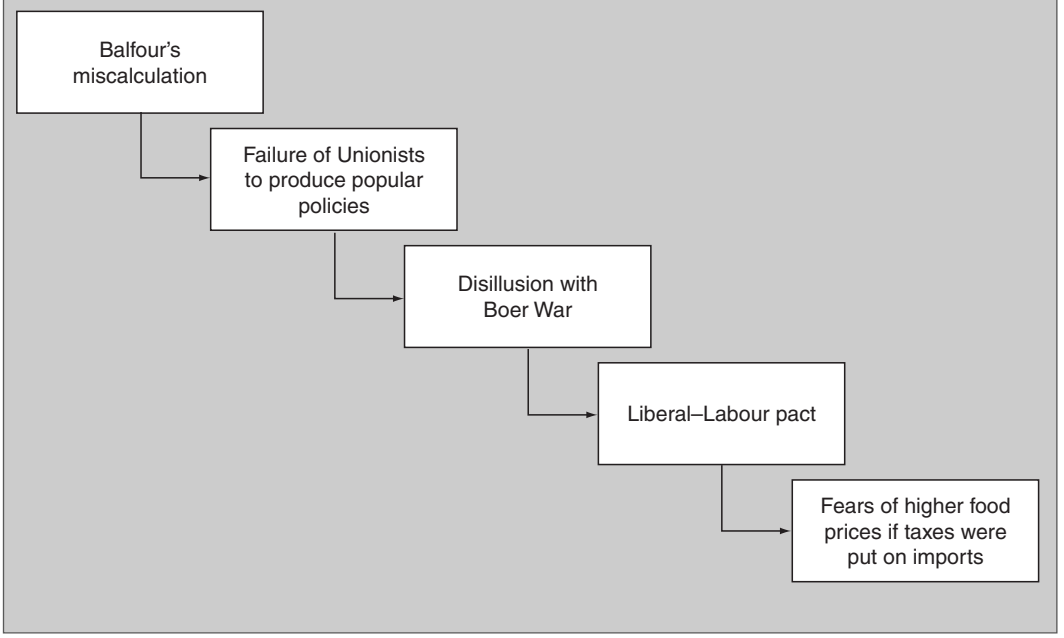
The result of these factors, taken together, was catastrophic for the Unionists. Balfour lost his seat at the election and was forced into fighting a by-election later in the year before he could return to the House of Commons. Two-thirds of the remaining Unionist MPs were Chamberlain supporters who wanted to abandon free trade, while the other third were pledged to retain it. The Liberals had an overall majority of 108 but were likely to be supported in most things by both the **Irish Nationalists** and the Labour Party. This meant they were now capable of amassing immense majorities (over 350) in the House of Commons where, for the time being at least, the Unionists were now almost an irrelevance.

Key terms

Marginal seat Constituency where the MP has only a small majority and there is a real possibility of its being won by another MP from a different party.

Irish Nationalists Those Irish politicians who demanded greater (or even full) independence for Ireland from Great Britain.

Summary diagram: The general election 1906



Study Guide: AS Questions

In the style of AQA

(a) Explain why some Liberals came to accept 'New Liberal' ideas in the years 1902–5. (12 marks)

(b) 'The support of the Labour Party played a crucial part in the Liberal success in the 1906 election.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. (24 marks)

Exam tips

The cross-references are intended to take you straight to the material that will help you to answer the questions.

(a) You will need to show an understanding of what 'New Liberalism' was but do not fall into the trap of writing a description. Instead you should consider its attractions: the need for a change of policy both on social and political grounds and the discrediting of 'Old Liberalism'. Try to offer a range of reasons and show the links between them.

(b) The focus of this question is on the Labour Party and you may want to look ahead to page 85 for further details on the rise of Labour. The main point for consideration is the significance of the Labour Party's electoral pact with the Liberals but you will almost certainly want to argue that this was not the 'crucial' factor in Liberal success. Balance the part it played against the attractions of the Liberal Party itself and the weaknesses of the Conservatives. You may also like to mention the position of the Irish nationalists who, arguably, played a bigger part than the Labour Party. Ensure your answer is argued throughout and that you supply a clear and substantiated conclusion.

In the style of OCR B

Answer **both** parts of your chosen question.

(a) How is the rise of New Liberalism best explained? [Explaining ideas, attitudes and circumstances.] (25 marks)

(b) Why did the Liberals win a landslide victory in 1906? [Explaining events and circumstances.] (25 marks)

Exam tips

General Introduction

You always have two pairs of questions and you have to answer both parts of one pair. In your chosen pair, each question will be different so each needs full and separate treatment. Each question in your pair is equally weighted so spend equal time on part **(a)** and part **(b)**. Both must be answered with an essay.

All questions in this exam paper (F981) require an answer that explains and makes sense of the past. Your task is to construct that historical explanation. The information in the square brackets below each question identifies for you the kind of explanation that you need to start off working with. To prepare a good answer for each essay, you have to work through four stages: (i) identify the various factors that explain the question set. There will always be more than one and they will be a mixture of ideas, actions and events; (ii) work out the role that each factor played; (iii) decide which factor or factors were more important than the others so that you can explain why, and back up your claims with supporting evidence; and (iv) establish why and how some of those factors influenced others – again, with supporting evidence so you can justify your arguments. Explanation goes well beyond reciting the facts to weigh them up and offer judgements.

Work through each of those four steps in rough and you have got your essay plan. Write up each stage and you have got your essay: well structured and focused on the question. If you only complete step (i), your answer will be just a basic list of ideas, actions and events so it will not score well. If you complete steps (ii) and (iii), your answer will have arranged those ideas, actions and events according to their relative importance. That explanation of the issue set will be quite advanced so it will score in Level 4 (16–20 marks) if you really have explained things carefully. To reach the top (21–5 marks), you have to go one stage further and simultaneously explain the interaction of component ideas, actions and events – not just putting them in rank order of importance but establishing cause and effect from one to another. Do all of that and you will have given an excellent answer and constructed a strong historical explanation that makes real sense of the past and shows that you don't merely know what happened but understand what was going on, and why. The guidance provided in each chapter is not built around the only possible answer to each question – there is never only one answer in history. They are examples to show you how to construct a successful historical explanation.

(a) Given the question ('How … best explained?'), your essay needs to develop a hierarchy of explanations, establishing relative importance between specific causal actions, ideas and attitudes. Equally, you must consider interactions between individual events and attitudes/beliefs in helping to bring about New Liberalism. The prompt points you to start with a focus on intentional explanation – so the core of your essay should be a set of overlapping circles considering various explanations for the rise. Equally, don't forget to decide which reason(s) is/are the best. It is helpful to keep doing that via mini-conclusions as you go. Don't save all the judgements to the very end.

Keep your focus on radicalism and do not go back before the 1880s. You might start with the 1885 'Unauthorised Programme' or the 1891 Newcastle Programme, but don't fall into the trap of telling a chronological story. Rather, your essay must look at issues: the need for social reform, the need for educational reform, the need for constitutional and democratic reform. Each would make a good circle in its own right. Another circle could look at the importance of the influence from abroad. Germany was already ahead of Britain in many of these areas. It also showed the way for the Liberals to capture the electoral support of the working classes (rather than let it be captured by the Tories and/or, as time when on, the emerging but still tiny ILP, LRC, Labour Party). A third circle could assess the significance of individuals in pushing New Liberalism, e.g. Jo Chamberlain early on and David Lloyd George later. In turn, that would lead you to the overall decision about 'why?'. Was New Liberalism an ideological crusade to tackle the horrors of industrial Victorian Britain or was it really a flanking attack on political rivals: policies to give (a) the Liberal Party a long-term tactical advantage in winning elections and/or (b) individual Liberals the additional support they needed to rise in the party and, perhaps, become prime minister? Remember that one reason the 1900–5 government became unpopular was its failure to tackle social problems. Remember also the panic caused by the poor quality of army recruits during the Boer War: many woke up to connections between the health of the nation and the nation's ability to defend itself against modern, massed Continental armies. And do not forget 1903; Liberals and the LRC were not then automatic enemies.

(b) The prompt suggests you to start in the causal mode explaining events and states of affairs. You could have two sets of circles: one considering negative reasons why the Tories lost and one considering positive reasons why the Liberals won. Alternatively, you could have a different pairing of circles: short-term reasons (e.g. the failure of Balfour's tactical gamble to wrong-foot the Liberals by resigning in 1905) and longer term reasons (the opposition of trades unionists to the 1901 Taff Vale case and Nonconformists to the 1902 Education Act). Either way, as you go, you will need to consider the relative importance of the

various reasons you examine – those mini-conclusions along the way will in turn give you your overall verdict.

One key question to consider might be why the Unionists lost so many seats (including that of the prime minister himself). Putting aside the exaggeration caused by Britain's first-past-the-post electoral system, the scale of the Unionist collapse and the Liberal gains was staggering; the Unionists won only one new seat in the entire country (Hastings). Around this question could turn your assessment of whether it was the Liberals who won the election or the Unionists who lost it. They had upset many voters: trades unionists, the Nonconformists, those seeing social reforms as urgent, anyone who after the Boer War asked whether the Empire was such an asset any more, anyone on a limited income (imperial preference caused higher food prices – something the Liberals focused on heavily in the 1906 election).

Against that, you can point to changes in the fortunes of both parties. In the 1890s, the Liberals were badly disunited. Thanks to the brilliant leadership of Campbell-Bannerman, they recovered completely; while the Unionists collapsed under serious divisions. British voters have always reacted against divided parties. To that circle you can add another important plus: the 1903 Liberal/LRC electoral pact, while in the long term it may have helped to undermine the Liberals, it certainly delivered a series of marginal seats to Liberal candidates in 1906. The point was that the two groups agreed not to fight each other in constituencies where both were quite strong in order to guarantee that a Unionist candidate could not slip between them and win. Throughout your answer, your job is not just to identify each positive and negative factor, but to weigh them against each other and to justify your decisions.

3 The Liberals and Social Reform 1906–14

POINTS TO CONSIDER

Social conditions relate to the standard of living enjoyed by a nation's people and in particular the standards of life of its poorest and most vulnerable inhabitants. Although by 1900 the poorest classes in Britain were undoubtedly better off than they had been in the past, there was concern about how fast conditions were improving and about the standards gap between the poor and the middle and upper classes, which seemed to be increasing. In this chapter the issue of social reform will be examined in three ways:

- The attitudes to social reform
- The Liberal reforms
- An assessment of the achievements of the Liberals

Key dates

1906	Liberals win January general election The Education (Provision of Meals) Act
1906–8	Legislation to help children from poorer families
1907	Education Act
1908	Children's Act Old Age Pension Act
1909	Introduction of old age pensions The 'People's Budget' introduced, increasing taxes for the wealthy
1911	National Insurance Act

1 | Attitudes to Social Reform

Key question
Why was social reform a priority for the Liberals by 1906?

The failure to develop a policy of **social reform** to meet the needs of the lower classes was one of the main reasons for the decline in the position of the Unionist Government by 1905. The Liberals were determined not to make the same mistake and after they formed the government in 1905 they started a programme of social reform.

Key term
Social reform
The introduction of new laws to improve social conditions.

The reasons why social reform had become such an important issue were:

- the inadequacy of the existing provision for the poor
- the growing interest and studies into poverty by social reformers
- the Boer War.

The Poor Law and workhouses

In 1905 the main safety net provided by the state to protect people who lacked any means of support was the Poor Law (first created in 1601, but amended in 1834). This later amendment introduced the 'deterrent principle', which meant that people without any means of supporting themselves were discouraged from seeking aid unless there was absolutely no alternative. In order to achieve this, the workhouses, which were run on a strict regime of discipline, had been set up to accommodate anyone genuinely seeking support, but to deter those able-bodied men and women who were thought to be seeking help out of laziness, when really they were perfectly capable of working for a living.

In fairness to the founders of the system, the intention had never been to apply a harsh workhouse regime to defenceless people such as children, the elderly or even those unemployed men and women who were honestly seeking work. However, over the course of the nineteenth century, the nature of workhouses had changed. From being originally conceived of as short-term deterrents for scroungers, they had become the primary refuge of the old, the sick, and abandoned women and their children. These people overwhelmingly made up the bulk of the workhouse population by the 1880s. Even so the deterrent principle was still applied, though in varying degrees of severity from place to place.

The prison-like appearance and internal discipline of the workhouses made them an object of fear and shame for those most likely to end up in them. Many people routinely put up with severe deprivation rather than submit to entering a workhouse.

By the 1890s, the scandal of deprivation and the grimness of the workhouses had become demanding political issues. Both of the main political parties were, in theory, committed to do something about the situation. From the late 1860s onwards Conservative and Liberal Governments both introduced legislation aimed at improving the state of **public health** and controlling the worst conditions in factories and agricultural work. These policies, however, did nothing to address the core problem of the working classes – inadequate or inconsistent incomes (especially in old age or infirmity) and a lack of access to medical treatment.

Key term

Public health
A general term relating to issues such as disease, sanitation, living and working conditions and pollution.

Studies into poverty

From the 1880s a series of investigations undertaken by social reformers anxious to force the government to take action, revealed the extent of the poverty that many people were enduring.

In 1881 the publication of *Progress and Poverty* by an American, Henry George, sparked off the interest. Actual case studies of real families began to build up a picture of the standard of living of the poor. These studies showed conditions of overcrowding and substandard housing, malnutrition and ill health, and caused the political debate to develop and intensify. Two investigations stand out as particularly influential. These were:

- Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People of London* – a massive study published over the period 1889–1903 in several volumes.
- Seebohm Rowntree's *Poverty, A Study of Town Life*, which appeared in 1903.

Booth argued that 30 per cent of the population of London fell below a poverty line income level of between 90 and 105 pence per week. Rowntree's study was based on York and showed a similar picture. Rowntree also applied a very tight set of guidelines for defining poverty so as to avoid any charge of exaggeration of his findings. The overall message of these investigations was that around one-third of the entire population was living in conditions which were dangerously deprived.

Impact of the Boer War

In itself this evidence might still have not been enough to produce a political response. However, the Boer War of 1899–1902 produced an unexpected impetus for social reform. Britain did not have a system of **conscription** so when additional troops were needed for the war the army had to rely on those men who were willing to volunteer. There was no shortage of recruits, but an alarming percentage of those who did apply were found to be unfit for military service through a variety of medical conditions.

Key term
Conscription
Compulsory military service.

The Boer War was a relatively small conflict against an enemy that did not pose any direct threat, so the high rate of rejection of volunteers did not affect the army too badly. However, it raised the question of what might happen if Britain faced a much larger conflict in Europe at some point in the future. The health of the nation therefore took on quite a different aspect when seen in that way and some people who might not have sympathised with social reform purely for its own sake became convinced of its necessity.

The Liberal Party's attitude towards social reform

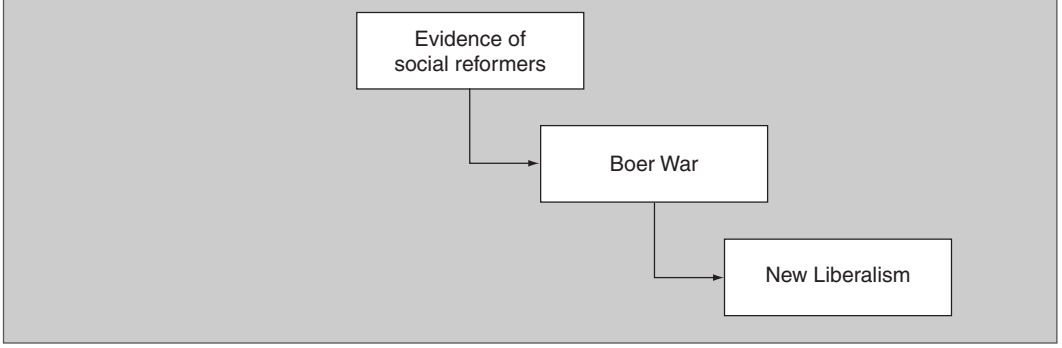
Key question
Why was social reform a controversial subject?

The Liberals took office in 1905 with a general commitment to the improvement of working-class conditions. However, though they were pledged to do this in general terms they took over the government with few really detailed proposals. This was partly due to the suddenness with which they came to power and the immediate need to call a general election (see pages 34–5). But, it also stemmed from the divisions they had suffered in recent years and the potentially controversial nature of any new social reform legislation.

- The enthusiasts for 'New Liberalism', such as David Lloyd George, wished to see the government intervening much more directly to help improve life for the lower classes. This meant introducing national schemes for unemployment benefits, sickness benefits, old age pensions and even the introduction of child allowances, all of which would have to be paid for mainly out of the taxes imposed on the better off.
- More traditional Liberals still clung to the idea of individual effort and enterprise as the means to self-improvement.

Although the leading Liberals, like the new Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Herbert Asquith, mostly leaned towards intervention, they were only too aware of the need to move very cautiously in the interests of maintaining unity within the Liberal Party as a whole.

Summary diagram: Pressure for social reform



2 | The Liberal Reforms

Key date
Liberals win January general election: 1906

The controversial nature of the question of how to go about improving the lives of the poorest sections of society meant that firm plans of action might have proved too divisive in the run-up to an election. However, when the Liberals won their great election victory in 1906 they were committed in principle to bringing in social reforms to benefit the lowest classes. Their attention centred on three areas:

- the condition of children of the poorest families
- the condition of elderly people with no means of independent support
- the problem of poverty resulting from sickness and unemployment.

Key question
In what ways did working-class children need support?

The welfare of children 1906–8

The least controversial of these areas was the question of the condition of working-class children. Children were not only the most directly vulnerable section of society, they were also the only group that could not be held in any way to blame for their

problems. Sickness could be seen as self-inflicted or feigned and unemployment as the result of sheer laziness. Even the elderly could be seen as poverty-stricken in old age because of a lack of saving during their working lives. None of these accusations could reasonably be levelled at children. Those who wanted reform on a wider scale saw the cause of suffering children as a powerful emotional starting point.

Even so, some (including some Liberals) still believed that children were solely the concern of their parents or families and that any government intervention on their behalf would undermine individual freedom and individual responsibility. Despite such views, however, there was a general feeling that the pitiful condition of the poorest working-class children was nothing short of a national disgrace.

The Education (Provision of Meals) Act 1906

The first direct move to ease the suffering of deprived children came in 1906 with the passing of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act. The issue of undernourished children had increasingly been highlighted since the extension of local rate support to all schools in the 1890s and the creation of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in the 1902 Education Act (see page 11).

The problem was that children who were too hungry and physically weak could not benefit properly from education. Reports from local doctors and school inspectors were well documented by 1906. The result was a **Private Member's Bill** introduced by a Labour MP, which the Liberal Government took over and adopted as government policy.

The 1906 Act enabled LEAs to provide school meals for 'needy' children by charging an additional rate of a halfpenny in the pound. However, the key word here was 'enabled'. The Act did not make it compulsory for LEAs to do this and many did not rush to take up their new power. By 1911 less than one-third of them were using additional rates to provide school meals and the Board of Education decided to take additional powers under which they could order such provision.

The Education Act 1907

In 1907, the Liberal Government introduced a new Education Act, which made school medical inspections for children compulsory. Under this Act:

- At least three inspections had to take place during a child's school years.
- These inspections were to be conducted in school and during school hours by a properly qualified doctor.
- The first inspection had to be done as soon as possible after the child had started school.

Unlike the regulations covering the provision of school meals this legislation was compulsory from the start. This was because:

Key term

Private Member's Bill
All MPs have a right to introduce bills on their own initiative, which, if passed, become law. In the nineteenth century it was very common for even major pieces of legislation to be sponsored in this way by individual MPs rather than the government and sometimes even in defiance of the government. This virtually died out during the twentieth century and the very few Private Member's Bills that are allowed in any session can only succeed with the government's agreement.

School Medical Officer (examining child's eyes). "NOW, LITTLE GIRL, CAN YOU SEE MY FINGER?"
Child (coyly). "I SHAN'T TELL YOU."

Cartoon reflecting the compulsory school inspections for children.

- Compulsory elements in laws concerning public health matters had been used in all kinds of situations since the first Public Health Act of 1848, so compulsion on this kind of issue was not very controversial.
- The recruitment of volunteers for the Boer War had produced a sense of urgency about improving the health of the young (see page 44). This was because it had shown just how appalling the health standards suffered by large numbers of the working-class population actually were.

The Children's Act 1908

In 1908, the Children's Act introduced a variety of measures to deal with wider aspects of neglect and abuse. **Juvenile courts** and **remand homes** were set up to remove child offenders from the adult courts and prisons. Severe penalties were introduced for the ill treatment of children, and also for selling them tobacco and alcohol in unsealed containers. Finally, in the budget of 1909, Lloyd George introduced direct financial assistance for child welfare in the form of child allowances to be paid at a rate of £10 per year per child for the poorest families.

These measures to improve the welfare of children were the Liberal's principal achievement during their first two years in office.

The Liberals failed in an attempt to introduce an eight-hour day for the mining industry. They did manage to ensure that the principle of Workmen's Compensation, for injuries occurring in the workplace, was extended to cover some six million workers, but overall, only the Child Welfare reforms stopped it from

Key terms

Juvenile courts Law courts dealing only with offences committed by children.

Remand homes Detention centres where children convicted of offences could be sent to learn and develop rather than being sent to prison.

seeming a very unimpressive record. Even allowing for the progress in helping working-class children to obtain a better start in life, some of the more radical Liberals, such as Lloyd George, were less than satisfied.

Asquith takes over

In April 1908, the Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman was forced to resign through illness. Asquith was his natural successor (see page 32) and, in the Cabinet reshuffle that followed, Lloyd George, who had built up a formidable reputation at the Board of Trade, was promoted to become the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was replaced at the Board of Trade by Winston Churchill.

Churchill was a former Conservative who had joined the Liberals in protest against the policy of tariff reform in 1903 (see page 22). He had since established himself as a radical reformer. Lloyd George and Churchill were determined to use their new seniority to push for a much more ambitious programme of social reform. Not only did they genuinely want more radical reforms, they also believed that it was a political necessity for the Liberals to show themselves capable of developing a really progressive policy if the party was not to lose out in future elections to the Unionists and the Labour Party.

Old age pensions

Key question
Who benefited from the introduction of old age pensions?

When the Liberals came to power in 1905 there was no provision for **state pensions** for the elderly. Old people were expected either to continue working to support themselves or to have saved enough in their working lives to maintain themselves in retirement. Failing either of these there was only the charity of their families or the workhouses provided under the feared and hated Poor Law. For most working-class people only the last two options really applied, as their incomes were too low for saving on the scale that would provide for old age, and their work was usually too physically demanding to be carried on in old age.

Key term
State pension Money paid to people over a certain age out of state funds.

The basic principle that some kind of financial support should be provided by the state for a dignified old age had been discussed since the 1880s, but the cost of providing such a system had deterred successive governments from taking on the issue.

The Old Age Pension Act 1908

During the last phase of his time as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Asquith had been working on the idea of introducing a system of old age pensions. His budget proposals for 1908 contained provisions for financing the introduction of a scheme and Lloyd George inherited the responsibility for putting the finishing touches to the budget and presenting it to the House of Commons.

Lloyd George then took on the job of piloting an old age pensions bill through into law. The provision that this made for the poorest of the elderly was relatively modest, especially when considered against the length of time it had taken to get any form

Profile: David Lloyd George 1863–1945

1863 – Born
1890 – Elected MP
1906 – Cabinet minister as President of Board of Trade
1908 – Chancellor of the Exchequer
1908 – Introduced old age pensions
1909 – Introduced 'People's Budget'
1911 – Introduced unemployment and sickness benefits
1915 – Minister for Munitions
1916 – Secretary for War
1917 – Prime Minister
1922 – Forced to resign
1945 – Died

Background

David Lloyd George was born in Manchester in 1863. His father was a school headmaster who died very soon after his son's birth. Lloyd George's mother, left with no other means of support, returned to her home village of Llanystumdwy in North Wales to live with her brother, who ran a small business as a shoemaker. Lloyd George was therefore brought up in a Welsh-speaking environment in which English was very much a second language.

The family were religious Nonconformists, hostile to both the Anglicanism and social and political predominance of the local English-speaking gentry families. Lloyd George's background was not well off financially but, on the other hand, it was culturally rich. His 'Uncle Lloyd', effectively his adopted father, was a man of considerable intellect and very strong religious faith. Although of limited formal education, Uncle Lloyd was passionate about the value of education and determined to give his adopted family (Lloyd George had an elder brother and sister) the best possible start in life. Uncle Lloyd taught himself French in order to be able to improve the children's education, and saw Lloyd George and his older brother safely through legal studies and into careers as solicitors.

Early career

Lloyd George was devoted to the idea of a political career from his teens and, at the age of 26, after making a name for himself as a rising nationalist figure on local political issues, he was elected as Liberal MP for Carnarvon Boroughs. This was despite determined opposition from the Conservatives who had previously dominated the constituency. He continued to represent the constituency for the next 55 years.

In 1902–3 Lloyd George took a leading role in the Nonconformists' opposition to the Balfour Education Act (see page 11). In 1905, when the Liberals came to power, he became a junior member of Campbell-Bannerman's Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade. He at once showed his administrative ability with a range of reforming legislation and, in 1908, when Asquith became Prime Minister, he appointed Lloyd George to replace him as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Chancellor

As Chancellor, Lloyd George oversaw the completion of the old age pension legislation and developed the Budget of 1909. During the constitutional crisis with the House of Lords (see pages 66–7), Lloyd George became the leading critic of the peers' resistance, first to the Budget and then to the Parliament Bill. In 1911 he introduced the first National Insurance legislation. By 1914 he had developed a close working relationship with Asquith and was seen as second or possibly third (behind Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary) in terms of seniority.

Later career

During the First World War, Lloyd George was first of all responsible for adapting the country's financial policies to meet the needs of a wartime economy. From 1915 he was successively Minister of Munitions, Secretary for War and then Prime Minister in 1916. His appointment as Premier caused a clash with Asquith, which had disastrous consequences for the future of the Liberal Party and from which it arguably never recovered (see page 146).

After the war, Lloyd George continued to lead a coalition government with the Conservatives until their backbenchers withdrew their support in October 1922, which forced him to resign (see Chapter 8). He never held office again. His private life was controversial, especially his relationships with women, and he became the first Prime Minister to live openly with a 'mistress' (who was 25 years his junior). Remarkably, though his lifestyle was well known, no public scandal ever came out during his lifetime. In 1944, with his health in serious decline, and knowing he could not possibly fight another election campaign after the war he reluctantly accepted a peerage in the hope of being able to contribute to the post-war debates on the peace settlement. However he died in February 1945 with the war still unfinished, without having taken his place in the Lords.

of assistance provided. The first payments were finally made on 6 January 1909. The terms of the Act were:

- Pensions of 5s (25p) per week would be paid to those aged 70 or over who had annual incomes of £21 or less.
- For those with annual incomes over £21 a sliding scale of reduced payments would be made. Those with an annual income of £31 or over would receive no payment.
- There were a number of categories of people excluded:
  - those who had claimed poor relief in the previous year
  - people who had been in prison in the previous 10 years
  - those who had failed to work regularly.

In practice these rules did not result in a great reduction in the number of claimants. The qualifying period for ex-convicts was eventually reduced to two years.

By 1914, there were 970,000 claimants, costing the Exchequer a total of £12 million a year.

Key date
Introduction of old age pensions: 1909

Though often criticised for the relatively high starting age – 70 was a tougher milestone to achieve then than it has subsequently become – the system had a massive impact on the lives of the beneficiaries (see Table 3.1). The 'Lloyd George money', as it became widely known, released many from the threat of the workhouse or dependence on often hard-pressed relatives. A pensions system had been under discussion since the 1880s at least. The Liberals made it a reality.

Key question
What is the value of this kind of evidence to a historian studying the introduction of old age pensions in 1909?

Table 3.1: Typical weekly living costs of an elderly person in 1908 as published in a radical magazine, *The Woman Worker*

	s.	*d.*
Rent	2	3
Paraffin (pint)	1	½
Coal	2	½
Tea	1	
Sugar	1	½
Potatoes	1	
Mutton	1	0
Flour	1	
Porter (a type of beer)	1	¾
Pepper, salt and vinegar	1	½
Loaf of bread	2	½
Total:	4	5¼ (22p)

Comparing old and new money

Before 1970 Britain's system of money was not based on the decimal system, as is seen in Table 3.1. The £1 unit was made up of 20 shilling units. Each shilling unit was made up of 12 penny units. When the currency was decimalised the rate set was 1 new penny = 2.4 old pennies because 100 new pennies would make up a pound whilst 240 old pennies had previously made up a pound.

Key question
What success did the government have in introducing reforms to help the unemployed?

Employment: welfare and protection

Once the issue of old age pensions had at last been tackled, Lloyd George was determined to move on to the problem of the hardship caused by loss of earnings due to unemployment and sickness. By the middle of 1908 this was a serious issue because the general economic situation was becoming difficult for the lower income groups. Unemployment was rising and wages were either stationary or falling. At the same time, inflation was reducing the real value of wages by pushing up the cost of living.

At the Board of Trade, Churchill introduced an Act setting up **labour exchanges** in 1909. The aim of this was to make it easier for the unemployed to get in touch with potential employers.

Meanwhile, in 1908, Lloyd George went to Germany to study the German system of **social insurance** at first hand. (A welfare system had been in existence in Germany since the 1880s.) By the autumn of 1908 a team of civil servants were working on the principles of a scheme to introduce unemployment and sickness insurance into Britain.

Key terms

Labour exchanges
Government offices where the unemployed could be helped to find work.

Social insurance
The provision of support to those unable to look after themselves.

THE NEW YEAR'S GIFT.

Cartoon on old age pensions.
What point is the cartoonist making about the introduction of old age pensions?

Although work on the schemes was well advanced by 1909, their eventual implementation was delayed until the National Insurance Act of 1911. The first payments under the new laws were not made until the summer of 1912 (for unemployment) and the beginning of 1913 (for health).

The delay was mainly because Lloyd George and Churchill, who were the politicians in charge of the details, wanted to deal with both sickness and unemployment at the same time. Unemployment insurance was relatively uncontroversial and, on its own, could probably have been introduced without any difficulty in 1909. Sickness benefits, however, were an entirely different matter.

Opposition to sickness benefits

The reason why there was controversy when it came to sickness benefits was because there were some powerful vested interests already operating in this field. The **friendly societies**, **industrial insurance companies** and doctors would all be

Key term

Friendly societies and **Industrial insurance companies**
Types of insurance company providing policies at cheap rates to enable to the less well off to provide for funeral, sickness expenses or injuries suffered at work.

Key question
Why was there resistance to government intervention?

affected by the intervention of the government into this kind of benefit provision.

The insurance companies and friendly societies collected millions of pounds every year in payments from lower middle-class and better off working-class families. This was to pay for policies covering them for different benefits such as sick pay or doctors' visits. The poorest working-class families could not afford these policies and generally had no protection at all other than charity organisations. It took months of difficult negotiations for Lloyd George to work out and agree suitable safeguards and compromises with the various companies, who were often as suspicious of each other as they were of the government. However, it is worth pointing out that many of these societies were working-class organisations which had had served their clients well. Indeed, recent research suggests that they often operated more efficiently and cheaply than the state schemes that replaced them.

There was also opposition from the doctors' organisation, the British Medical Association. This opposition was mainly a result of the influence of the wealthier doctors who feared that the status of their profession would be lowered if they were paid by government. However, the adoption of a 'panel' system, which allowed insured patients to choose their own doctor from a panel of doctors under the control of a local health committee, proved very popular with the less well-off doctors, especially those in the inner cities. They realised that their incomes would rise considerably from this new source of patients.

Key question
Who was to benefit from National Insurance?

The National Insurance Act 1911

The National Insurance Act was in two separate parts. Part I dealt with Health Insurance and was the responsibility of the Treasury. Part II dealt with Unemployment Insurance and was the responsibility of the Board of Trade.

Health insurance provision

The Health Insurance system worked as follows:

- All workers earning less than £160 per year and aged between 16 and 60 were included – around 15 million in all.
- Weekly contributions were taken from the worker (4d), the employer (3d) and the government (2d). This encouraged Lloyd George to coin the slogan '9d, for 4d,' in his attempts to make the idea popular.

The resulting entitlement was:

- Sickness benefit of 10s (50p) per week for 13 weeks (7s 6d for women); 5s (25p) per week for a further 13 weeks after that. Later, the reduced benefit for the second 13-week period was abolished in favour of full benefit for 26 weeks.
- A 30s maternity grant.
- 5s a week disability benefit.
- Free medical treatment under a panel doctor.

Non-working wives and children were not covered by the scheme, nor was hospital treatment – except for admission to a **sanatorium**, which was mainly intended to benefit tuberculosis sufferers.

Key term
Sanatorium
A kind of hospital especially for recovery from long-term debilitating conditions. Emphasis was placed on rest, cleanliness and good ventilation.

THE DOCTOR.

(With Apologies to Sir Luke Fildes, R.A.)

PATIENT (*General Practitioner*). "THIS TREATMENT WILL BE THE DEATH OF ME.'
DOCTOR BILL. "I DARE SAY YOU KNOW BEST. STILL THERE'S ALWAYS A CHANCE."

Cartoon depicting Asquith as a doctor. What does the cartoon reveal about the issue of sickness benefit provision?

Unemployment Insurance

The Unemployment Insurance scheme was much less ambitious and covered far fewer workers. In all a total of 2.25 million were protected, mainly in construction and engineering trades, which were susceptible to fluctuating employment levels. The idea was to support workers over a short period of time out of work. It was not meant to tackle the problem of long-term unemployment.

The Unemployment Insurance scheme was as follows:

- Weekly contributions were 2½d each from workers, employers and the government.
- The insured workers were entitled to a payment of 7s per week benefit for up to a maximum of 15 weeks.

Key question
How widely did the Liberals' social reforms range?

Other Liberal achievements in social reform

Numerous other reforms were also undertaken by the Liberal Governments and can be summarised as follows:

- A Trades Disputes Act in 1906 protected trade unions on strike from being sued by employers.
- A Workmen's Compensation Act in 1906 brought all categories of worker under the provisions for compensation for accidents at work and extended protection to cover injury to health.
- A Merchant Shipping Act in 1906 brought in by Lloyd George provided tight controls on standards of food and accommodation on British Merchant Ships.
- A Coal Mines Act in 1908 introduced a maximum eight-hour day for miners.
- A Trade Boards Act in 1909 set up boards to impose minimum wages in the so-called 'sweated trades' where low pay and long hours had long prevailed. Tailoring, box making, chain making and lace making were initially covered. The act was widened to include more trades in 1913.
- A Shops Act in 1910 entitled shop assistants to one half-day off each week.
- A further Mines Act in 1911 laid down regulations for training, safety measures and accident procedures.

Summary diagram: The main Liberal reforms

Date	*Act*	*Description*
1906	Education (Provision of Meals) Act	Enabled LEAs to provide school meals for 'needy' children
1907	Education Act	Made school medical inspections for children compulsory
1908	Children's Act	Juvenile courts and remand homes set up
1909	Old Age Pension Act	Pensions to be paid to those aged over 70 who had annual incomes of £31 or less
1909	Budget	Child allowances
1909	Labour exchanges	Set up to make it easier for unemployed to get in touch with employers
1911	National Insurance Act	Unemployment and sickness insurance

Key question
How radical were the social reforms that were introduced by the Liberals?

3 | Assessing the Liberal Achievement

The effect of these social reforms meant a significant increase in government intervention. The state had now assumed an unprecedented degree of responsibility for individuals in the lower classes of society. A great expansion in the civil service was required to oversee its administration. The sums spent on the new benefits exceeded all the official estimates.

This welfare legislation entirely by-passed the operations of the Poor Law and, to a considerable degree, appeared to make the question of its reform irrelevant. The Unionist Government had set up a Royal Commission to examine the Poor Laws in 1905.

By the time it reported in 1909 there was little political interest in any party in a major overhauling of the system. As a result the Poor Law largely fell into disuse until it was finally abolished in 1929.

The overall impact of the Liberals' social reforms has often been criticised as 'too little, too late'. **Left-wing historians** tend to dismiss them as limited concessions aimed at propping up the **capitalist system**.

The reality for people at the time was that by 1912, when the National Insurance provisions began to take effect, a very considerable boost had been given to the incomes of the poorest families. The combined effect of child welfare support, old age pensions, employment legislation, child allowances and National Insurance meant that a significant safety net had been established against poverty. Few poor families could fail to benefit from at least some aspect of this legislation. In particular, the relief to working-class budgets in respect to the support of elderly relatives, brought about by the Old Age Pensions Act, should not be underestimated.

It is not clear how the Liberals could have done much more at the time, given the contemporary views on the limits of taxation, and the fact that their philosophy was 'liberalism' (not '**socialism**'), which still recognised a role for individual enterprise and personal responsibility.

Key terms

Left-wing historians
Historians tending to reach their conclusions based on their political preference for Marxist-Socialist policies.

Capitalist system
Economic system based on private ownership of land and resources and driven by the need to make profits.

Socialism
A social and economic system in which private property in all forms is abolished and the means of production and distribution of wealth are owned by the community as a whole.

Study Guide: AS Questions

In the style of OCR A

Study the five sources on poverty and national efficiency, and then answer **both** sub-questions. It is recommended that you spend two-thirds of your time in answering part **(b)**.

(a) Study Sources B and C.
Compare these sources as evidence for the attitudes towards government responsibility for welfare. (30 marks)

(b) Study all the sources.
Use your own knowledge to assess how far the sources support the interpretation that in the period from 1900 to 1914 there was growing support for the need for state intervention in the problem of poverty and national efficiency. (70 marks)

Source A

From: S. Rowntree, Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, published in 1901. A factory owner and researcher of working-class life, who concluded that more than a quarter of the population of York were living in poverty, and explains its consequences.*

Let us clearly understand what 'bare physical efficiency' means. A family living on the poverty line must never go into the country unless they walk. The father cannot smoke tobacco and can drink no beer. The mother can never buy any pretty clothes for herself. The children can have no pocket money for toys or sweets. If any of these rules is broken, the extra expenditure can only be met by limiting the diet and sacrificing physical efficiency.

Source B

From: the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law and Relief of Distress, 1909. The report suggested that the existing Poor Law should be replaced by a completely new welfare system.

The nation faces today, as it did in 1834, an ever-growing expenditure from public and private funds, resulting in a minimum of prevention and cure, the far-reaching demoralization of character and the continuance of much unrelieved poverty. With regard to the relief of poverty, the Poor Law should now be included in a consistent welfare system. This should be based on recovering the cost from all who are able to pay, exempting those who cannot do so.

Source C

From: N. Pearson, The Idle Poor*, published in 1911. A middle-class writer argues for a policy to control the idle poor.*

It is to be feared that the habitual vagrant is seldom capable of being reformed. As a rule, he is not an ordinary person, but one who is a pauper in his blood and bones. Broadly speaking, paupers belong to inferior stock, and the community needs to be protected against them. Therefore, the proper authorities should be given the power of segregating and detaining those who burden the present, and endanger the future, of our race.

Source D

From: R.C.K. Ensor, The Practical Case for a Legal Minimum Wage*, published in 1912. A member of the Fabian Society puts the 'national efficiency' case for a minimum wage.*

If the labour unrest of these days indicates a disease in society, then the policy of the legally enforced minimum wage should appeal to moderate and far-seeing statesmen. We all know the findings of Mr Seebohm Rowntree. His figures probably understate the case today because the last decade has seen a steep rise in the cost of living. With low wages, physical efficiency is not maintained. The state should interfere in the matter of wages, just as it has with other problems which destroyed the nation's human resources.

Source E

From: K.W.W. Aikin, The Last Years of Liberal England 1900–1914*, published in 1972. A modern historian argues that the Liberal Party was divided over how the new welfare system should be funded.*

Although the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, inspired by the Webbs, had urged non-contributory aid to the unemployed as the provision of 'an enforced minimum of civilised life', Churchill recognised that many members of his party were not yet prepared to finance welfare out of general taxation. Compulsory contributory insurance, encouraging thrift and limiting any further extension of bureaucracy, seemed the obvious solution.

Exam tips

(a) The key here is to stick to the sources and the focus of the question. You are not asked why they may be different but it could be useful to point out the origin of the sources, especially if you are aware that the Minority Report of 1909 represented the views of the more radical reformers on the Royal Commission whose ideas had not found much expression in the official report. Clearly, Source B takes a far more sympathetic attitude towards the problem of poverty than that expressed in Source C. However, it is only fair to the author of Source C to point out that he is referring to a particular type of person who is habitually idle, not the 'ordinary person' who might fall on hard times through no fault of his own. Pearson is referring to the kind of 'pauper by choice' that the Poor Law was always intended to deter. The Minority Report is aimed at the more general issue of poverty. It is worth noting that both sources refer to the issue of costs and the social impact of poverty.

(b) There is a need to balance your answer between what can be gleaned from the sources and your own knowledge. Where possible, try to elaborate what the sources tell you from your own knowledge where you can. Look for ways to comment on what the origin of the sources adds to the overall picture. For example, Source B, while arguing a 'consistent welfare system' nevertheless represents a minority view of the Royal Commission. The content of Sources C and D indicates division, and Source E reflects the differences of approach within the Liberal Party. However, the question refers to 'growing' support and, taken together, the sources do suggest increasing awareness at least of the problem: Sources A, D and E can be linked to suggest this. In dealing with the sources make sure that you group them according to what they say to construct a thematic answer; however, the actual balance of coverage will necessarily depend on the individual content that each source offers. Be clear where you are using your own knowledge to add to the detail obtainable from the sources.

In the style of OCR B

Answer **both** parts of your chosen question.

(a) Why was social reform controversial in the period 1906–14? [Explaining ideas, attitudes and beliefs.] (25 marks)

(b) Explain the role of Lloyd George in the Liberal social reform programme. [Explaining motives, actions and states of affairs.] (25 marks)

Exam tips

Revise the General Introduction at the start of the Study Guide to Chapter 2 (page 39).

(a) The prompt steers you to start in the empathetic mode and your focus here must always be not on events, but on identifying and explaining why people felt as they did at the start of the twentieth century, and why the British public was divided on social reform. You must consider both sides: one set of circles explaining why some supported and another why some opposed social reform by the state. Remember the divide was not a simple one along party lines. Liberals differed quite seriously on how far reform should go, and not all Unionists opposed all social reform by government (from 1907, they competed actively with the Liberals with policy proposals).

One place to start would be 'traditional' Victorian ideas of the role of the state and the individual – because, to us, that is the side that is much harder for us to understand. Government should be very small and very cheap. Beyond a few core issues like national defence, laws to protect life and property, and basic sanitation to prevent epidemics, the state had no functions, no responsibilities. Anything else would be interference in the freedom of the individual to self-help. It was not the job of government to tell people how to live their lives or spend their money: tyrannical dictators like Napoleon did that. Individuals enjoyed freedom in Britain and so they were responsible for themselves. Much poverty was seen by many as self-inflicted: the unemployed were often lazy. The 'respectable poor' might deserve help, but the 'idle poor' did not and stopping money going to the latter would be very difficult.

'Self-help' was a key belief, reinforced by powerful Victorian religious beliefs and widely held across all social classes and political groupings (reference to Gladstone opposing virtually all social reform might be useful here, and link up with the point at the end of the first paragraph above). Any action would cost large sums raised in taxation and many saw that as the state robbing the population of their own money.

When considering the other side, keep again to ideas and reasons: do not wander off into explaining details of the problems of poverty, working conditions, housing conditions, etc. Your job is to explain why some thought that the state should take action in these matters and raise taxation to pay for it.

Human beings are complicated creatures so allow for a combination of motives, practical as well as idealistic. The Boer War had shown that the British population was not fit enough to take on the German army, and the only way to remedy that would be to see that the people were healthier and better educated. Equally, allow for individuals taking different positions on different reforms: opponents would often support action to help children because their poverty could not be their fault. That in part explains why the Liberals started with largely non-controversial areas: school meals (1906) and medical inspections of schools (1907). Pensions and social insurance were far more controversial.

(b) The intentional mode will start you with a focus on motives, but you will need to move over to a causal explanation if you are going to explain properly Lloyd George's key role in the social reform programme. In turn, circles of explanation can consider both his reasons for championing social reform and his role in pushing those reforms through. Keep the question clearly in mind, that will stop you wandering off into discussing Lloyd George and constitutional reform of the House of Lords.

You might start with Lloyd George, the working-class boy who aged at 26 years old became a radical politician determined to change Wales and Britain for the better. His background gave him a strong commitment to fighting social injustice and the power and privilege of the establishment. With that background and as an emerging figure of administrative as well as political talent, he was an obvious person not just to take a prominent role but to be given responsibility for seeing reform plans developed and then turned into legislation. Campbell-Bannerman promoted him in 1905 and, having proved himself as a junior minister, Asquith gave him the key post of chancellor. Be clear that there were other important Liberals in and out of the government active in the programme and that Lloyd George had limited direct ministerial responsibility during 1905–7, but do not dismiss his time at the Board of Trade: his Trades Disputes Act, Workman's Compensation Act and Coal Mines Act all brought significant social changes. At the same time, be clear that the alliance of Lloyd George and Churchill made for a powerful reformist block at the top of the party. From 1908, however, Lloyd George was the driving force in seeing through the remaining parts of the plan for old-age pensions and then in developing and carrying through National Insurance (1909–11). He did much to persuade Parliament and Britain that the role of the state needed to grow in social areas, and to accept (grudgingly) that taxes must rise to pay for it. However limited the programme may seem to us ('too little, too late'), these Liberal reforms were very radical for their day and went about as far as could be achieved in pre-1914 Britain.

4 The Liberals and Constitutional Reform 1906–14

POINTS TO CONSIDER

By the end of the twentieth century the powers of the House of Lords had become so limited that it was easy to forget how extensive they had been at the century's outset. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Lords had been seen as more important in many ways than the House of Commons. Its members had higher social status and as hereditary members were not subject to the uncertainty and expense of periodic elections. Prime Ministers were more frequently peers than MPs. Their Cabinet colleagues, especially the more senior ones, were also most likely to be peers.

This period saw the fundamental shift of power taking place away from hereditary political power towards elective political power, which this chapter will examine through the following themes:

- The nature of the dispute with the House of Lords
- The Budget of 1909 and the constitutional crisis it provoked
- The reform of the House of Lords 1911
- The issue of women's right to vote

Key dates

1903	Women's Social and Political Union formed
1906	Plural Voting Bill to end entitlement to vote in more than one constituency is defeated in the House of Lords
1907	Government passes resolutions in the Commons calling for reform of the House of Lords
1909	House of Lords rejects the Budget
1910	Parliament Bill introduced but rejected by House of Lords
1911	Parliament Act limiting the legislative powers of the House of Lords passed
1912	Government attempt to find a compromise on the issue of votes for women fails
1913	Plural Voting Act finally passed 'Cat and Mouse' Act

Key question
Why was the political role of the House of Lords controversial?

1 | The Problem of the House of Lords

The House of Lords at the beginning of the twentieth century still had a full range of political powers directly comparable to those of the House of Commons. The only exception in practice was that, by custom, the Lords did not interfere with what were termed 'money bills'; that is, any legislation directly to do with the raising of taxes or the spending of public money. Therefore, the government's annual Finance Bills (or budgets) were passed by the House of Lords without amendment or even debate. In all other cases the Lords could amend or reject any bill any number of times.

By 1900 the majority of adult males had the right to vote and it was clear that, before long, all males would have it. There was even the prospect that women would in the foreseeable future gain the **franchise**. As the electoral system for the House of Commons grew increasingly democratic, so the position of the House of Lords as an unelected chamber in which the right to membership rested on inheritance or direct appointment seemed more obviously unfair. Why should a few hundred privileged individuals be able to overturn the decisions of a House of Commons elected by around eight million voters?

Key terms

Franchise
The terms on which individuals hold the right to vote.

Veto
The right to reject a bill completely.

Nineteenth-century confrontations

During the nineteenth century there were several confrontations between the government and the House of Lords.

The most famous was in 1832 when the government had introduced a bill reforming the electoral system and giving more men the vote. The House of Lords had rejected this bill and it had only been passed when the government threatened to create enough new Lords from their own supporters to ensure that it would pass. The Lords had backed down in 1832, and the precedent had been set that in future conflicts the threat of a mass creation of new peers could be used to ensure that the will of the House of Commons would ultimately prevail over that of the Lords.

In the 1870s, the Conservative Prime Minister, Disraeli, had set out his view on how the House of Lords should conduct itself in the event of future conflicts. Disraeli argued that the Lords should only use its power to **veto** or amend bills with which it disagree where:

- Opinion in the Commons was very divided and the bill had passed by a very narrow majority.
- There was a clear feeling of public opinion against what was being proposed.
- The issue was so fundamental that it could be argued that no government could make such a big change without putting the issue to voters in a general election.

Since Disraeli's time the majority of governments had been Conservative and only one major clash had occurred. This had been in 1893 when Gladstone's last government managed to pass

a bill for Irish Home Rule through the Commons (see page 112). The Lords had rejected this bill, arguing that it did not have popular support in the country and depended on the Irish MPs for its majority. This position seemed to fulfil Disraeli's conditions and the Gladstone government did back down on the issue.

However, from 1906 the Liberals had such a massive majority that it was most unlikely that any bills would now be passed by small margins. Also the Liberals were pledged to issues such as social reform and Irish Home Rule during the election campaign. It was therefore unlikely that the House of Lords would be able to use the 'Disraeli Doctrine' to justify interfering with the Liberal Government's bills.

2 | The Constitutional Crisis 1909–11

Key question
Why did relations between the Liberal Government and the House of Lords become strained after the 1906 general election?

The origins of the **constitutional crisis**, which was triggered by Lloyd George's budget proposals of 1909 (see pages 66–8), did not lie in House of Lords' opposition to the principles of 'New Liberalism', for example, to the government's welfare reforms. On the contrary, the Unionist leadership generally welcomed the introduction of old age pensions and the reforms affecting children. They even promised to improve upon them if returned to office.

Key term
Constitutional crisis
A political crisis where the issues provoking the crisis relate to the rules under which the country is governed.

The real roots of the crisis lay in the political helplessness to which the Unionists were reduced in the House of Commons after the 1906 general election. With only 157 MPs the Unionists were almost irrelevant in the Lower House and it was not surprising that they began to consider how they might use their continued predominance in the House of Lords to try to redress the imbalance.

The Unionist leader Balfour had made a rather unwise comment in the heat of the 1906 election campaign, saying that 'the great Unionist Party should still control, whether in power or opposition, the destinies of this great Empire'. This was not intended as a commitment to blanket opposition to a future Liberal Government. In fact it was aimed at the specific issue of Irish Home Rule. Balfour was only too aware that the power of the Lords needed to be used selectively and with caution if it was to be effective. Between 1906 and 1909, therefore, the bills chosen for obstruction by the Unionist peers were identified carefully, in the hope of extracting the maximum embarrassment for the Liberals while steering away from issues where the government might secure popular support.

The 1906 Education Bill

The first confrontation came in 1906 over the government's proposed Education Bill. This amounted to a political pay-off to the Nonconformists for their support following the Education Act of 1902 (see pages 10–14). The Liberal Government felt indebted to its Nonconformist supporters and was committed to addressing their grievances. Therefore, despite the fact that some members of the Cabinet privately accepted the value of the 1902 Act it was

decided to introduce a bill to meet some of the Nonconformists' objections to it.

The 1906 Education Bill proposed that all Church of England schools should be taken over by the local authorities, who would appoint teachers without applying religious tests. Previously teachers had to be Anglican. Only general religious teaching, not specific to any religion, would be allowed. An exception to this was in areas where four-fifths of parents requested a specific type of religious doctrine to be taught, and even then only where there was sufficient choice of school provision unconnected to particular Churches. This exception was designed to help the Roman Catholic Church whose existing schools were already operating over and above the normal local requirement for places.

The provisions of this Education Bill angered the Anglicans as much as the 1902 Act had enraged the Nonconformists. A compromise was sought, with both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the king eventually becoming involved. Balfour had planned that controversial legislation should be opposed initially in the Commons and then amended to reach a compromise in the Lords. In this first test, however, the strategy failed since it proved impossible to hammer out a compromise that both sides could accept. Consequently, the government was forced to withdraw the bill, which they had seen as forming the centrepiece of their programme for the session.

The Lords rejected two other major bills in the period 1906–8:

- a bill to end **plural voting**
- a licensing bill aimed at further restrictions on the sale and consumption of alcohol.

This hardly amounted to a wholesale wrecking of the government's legislative programme. On the contrary, the targets were carefully selected. Significantly, trade union reform in 1906 was allowed to pass even though this allowed trade unions protection from being sued by their employers over strikes. Also, all of the social reforms detailed in Chapter 3 went through. This was because they realised it would be counter-productive to reject reforms with a wide popular appeal.

Key terms

Plural voting
An individual's right to vote in more than one constituency, e.g. if the place of residence and ownership of business premises were in two different areas.

Resolutions
Statements that are voted upon in principle but which, if passed, have no force in law.

The government's response 1907–8

The intention of the Unionists was to try to confuse and demoralise the Liberals. They had some success in this. By 1907 the government was trying to decide whether or not to confront the peers. One major problem was the lack of a really popular cause with which to appeal to the electorate. The Education Bill was important to certain sections of the Liberal Party, but it was not a matter of great importance to the public at large.

In 1907, therefore, Campbell-Bannerman did no more than introduce **resolutions** into the Commons calling for limitations on the power of the Lords to delay, amend or veto legislation. These resolutions were passed by a huge majority since they were supported not only by Liberals but also by Labour and the Irish

Key dates

Plural Voting Bill to end entitlement to vote in more than one constituency was defeated in the House of Lords: 1906

Government passed resolutions in the Commons calling for reform of the House of Lords: 1907

Nationalists. They remained, however, no more than a warning shot at the Upper House. When the 1908 session of Parliament opened, reform of the House of Lords remained conspicuously absent from the government's proposals.

It was not surprising that the government failed to address the issue of the powers of the Lords in 1908, since the Cabinet was entirely undecided over what to do.

- Some, like Campbell-Bannerman, simply wished to curb the power of the peers over legislation.
- However, others, including Sir Edward Grey, preferred to make reform of the composition of the Lords the priority.

Some moderate Unionist peers themselves were in favour of the latter course and there had even been a proposal from them to end automatic hereditary entry to the Lords during 1907. This proposition had been opposed by both the government and the more right-wing Unionist peers, though for differing reasons. The right-wing peers opposed any interference with the Lords' powers or composition. The government feared that reform of the composition of the Lords would make it harder, in the end, to justify limiting their legislative powers.

The political climate in 1907 and 1908 was hardly encouraging for the Liberals. Overall, the trend in by-election results was against them and most commentators expected a considerable Unionist revival when the next general election came.

Despite the introduction of old age pensions and child welfare reform, there was little improvement in the political fortunes of the Liberals by the beginning of 1909. The problem was that, however deserving these two groups might be of the government's attention, neither actually amounted to much in electoral terms. The government therefore urgently needed something compelling with which to regain the political initiative.

Fortunately for them there was soon a very obvious issue upon which to make a stand.

The Budget of 1909

Key question
Why was the Budget of 1909 so significant?

The Budget for 1909 was going to have to be a major reforming piece of legislation. There was no alternative to this because increasing expenditure on defence, along with increased spending on social welfare, meant that taxation had to be increased. Politically, the government could not risk cutting back in either sector but nor could it fund both from its existing revenue. As Lloyd George became increasingly aware of the extent of the future **budget deficits**, so he and Asquith exerted increasing pressure on the rest of the Cabinet to agree to an extensive reform of taxation.

Key term
Budget deficit
Occurs when more is being spent than raised in taxes – a gap that can only be filled by borrowing.

It was an accepted constitutional practice that the House of Lords could not amend or reject financial legislation. However, as rumours grew that the 1909 budget would contain radical proposals, speculation mounted that the Lords might consider breaking with tradition on the grounds that the budget went beyond normal financial provisions. In the event, some of

Cartoon depicting Lloyd George as a giant threatening the rich. How reliable is this cartoon for an understanding of the 1909 budget?
A 'plutocrat' is a person with great wealth.

RICH FARE.

THE GIANT LLOYD-GORGIBUSTER: "FEE, FI, FO, FAT,
I SMELL THE BLOOD OF A PLUTOCRAT;
BE HE ALIVE OR BE HE DEAD,
I'LL GRIND HIS BONES TO MAKE MY BREAD."

Asquith and Lloyd George's colleagues objected to the proposals. This produced a row within the Cabinet, which became public, over naval spending, which Lloyd George wanted to limit as far as possible.

It was hardly the best background against which to launch a revival of the government's fortunes and there is little doubt that, far from being aimed at provoking confrontation, the Budget was intended to strike enough of a balance to pass without causing a crisis with the Lords. This, however, was a forlorn hope.

In the 1909 Budget Lloyd George proposed to:

- Raise income tax on incomes over £3000 per annum to 1s 2d (6p) from the standard rate of 9d (4p) and bring in an additional tax of 6d (2½p) in the pound on incomes over £5000 per annum.
- Increase duties on spirits, tobacco, liquor licences and **stamp duties**.

Key term

Stamp duty
A tax paid to the government for legalising official or legal documents, e.g. on the sale of property.

- Increase **death duties** on estates valued between £5000 and £1 million pounds.
- Introduce land taxes on:
  - the increased value of land when it changed hands (20 per cent)
  - the annual value of land (1½d in £)
  - the annual value of land leased to mining companies (1s in £).
- Set up a road fund for building and maintaining roads by putting taxes on petrol and introducing licences for motor vehicles.
- Introduce child allowances at a rate of £10 a year for every child under the age of 16. This was payable to families with an annual income of less than £500.

Key term
Death duty
Taxes levied on the property or money left by a person when they die.

Opposition to the Budget

Key question
Why did the 1909 Budget lead to a constitutional crisis?

Concern about the Budget and even opposition to it became more widespread:

- Many Liberals (including some in the Cabinet) had their doubts.
- The Irish Nationalist MPs opposed the duty on spirits fearing it would damage the whiskey export trade, which was vital to employment, especially in Dublin.
- The brewers and distillers were obviously outraged as they would have to pay duty.
- The motorists (not so large a lobby then, of course, as they would later become) were similarly unimpressed.
- Most of all, landowners felt that they were being subjected to unfair treatment and they were particularly incensed by Lloyd George's plan to set up a Development Commission, one of whose tasks would be to carry out a comprehensive land valuation survey to provide the basis for calculating the new taxation on land. This seemed to be the thin end of a socialist wedge, which in future years could be used to attack wealth and force a redistribution of property on a significant scale.

Initially Balfour and Lord Lansdowne (the Unionist leader in the House of Lords) did not intend that the Lords should go so far as to reject the Budget. They instead wanted to extract compromises that would undermine the Budget and keep up the mounting pressure on the government. This, however, was a miscalculation. Neither Balfour nor Lansdowne appreciated at first the limited room for manoeuvre that each side had.

Lansdowne, in particular, underestimated the emotions that had been raised among the rank-and-file Unionist peers. A major reason for this was the fact that the Unionist leaders did not view the Budget in quite the same way as their supporters. To the latter the Budget proposals were an outright attack on the rights of property; the former were much more concerned about the future political implications that the proposals raised for Unionist policies.

The issue of tariff reform

The crux of the problem was that, by 1909, Unionism had effectively been won over to tariff reform (see pages 21–2). One of the key arguments of the tariff reformers was that large-scale social reform could only be funded effectively through the money that would be raised through taxing imports. The Liberals' Budget, by proposing a method of funding social reform while preserving free trade, therefore cut right to the heart of any popular appeal that tariff reform might have. The government knew this only too well and saw that this was a golden opportunity to underpin free trade once and for all and make the Unionists seem even more irrelevant.

Thus the budget crisis of 1909 was in essence an extension of the free trade versus protectionism debate (see page 14) and both sides believed that their political fortunes were at stake in its outcome.

It was the Unionists who were in the more difficult position. It was not easy to turn their case into a popular campaign since it involved some fairly complex arguments about the relationship between tariff reform, taxation, and spending on both social welfare and defence. The government had the much easier task of presenting the issue as simply one of the selfishness of a privileged class. By-elections in the summer of 1909 showed a swing to the Liberals and underlined the fact that the government was winning the argument in the country.

General election January 1910

Balfour and Lansdowne were increasingly driven into a corner. Surrender would split the party because of the expectations of resistance that had been raised, while resistance could only lead to a constitutional crisis. In the event, the matter was taken out of their hands since Lansdowne effectively lost control of the Unionist peers who decided to act as they saw fit. In November 1909 the Lords rejected the Budget and Asquith immediately asked for the dissolution of Parliament and a general election.

Key date
House of Lords rejected the Budget: 1909

The general election of January 1910 produced results that were unsatisfactory for almost everybody (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: General election results 1910

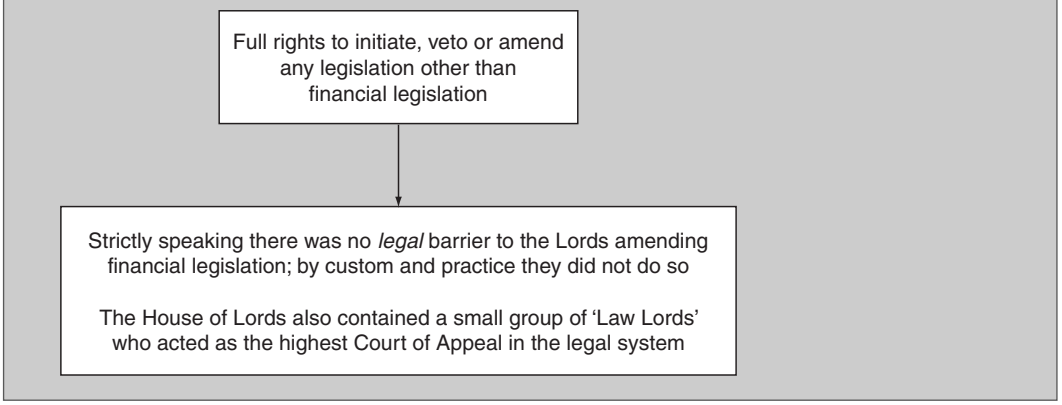
Party	*No. of seats*
Liberals	275
Unionists	273
Labour	40
Irish Nationalists	82

The Liberals could continue in office but only as a minority government. Their immediate problem with the Budget was solved because there was still a majority for it in the Commons. The Irish were prepared to support it in spite of their concerns about whiskey duty. Their support, however, came at a price. They wanted Home Rule for Ireland. However, since a Home

Rule Bill stood no chance of passing an unreformed House of Lords, they wanted a Parliament Bill to limit the Lords' powers to be passed first. In the circumstances the Liberal Government had little option but to agree to this. Ordinary Liberal MPs were demanding as much anyway.

In view of the result of the election the Lords had no choice but to pass the Budget, but the battle had now moved on to the question of their powers and most peers were set on a confrontation.

Summary diagram: The role of the House of Lords to 1911



3 | The Reform of the House of Lords 1911

Key question
Should the outcome of the constitutional crisis be seen as a success or a failure for the Liberal Government?

The Parliament Bill

The Parliament Bill that the government introduced in 1910 contained no surprises. It stated that:

- The Lords could not reject or amend financial legislation.
- There would be a limit of two rejections or amendments on other legislation in successive sessions within the life of a Parliament.
- The maximum duration of a Parliament (i.e. the length of time between general elections) was reduced from seven to five years. This was actually a concession to the Lords since it reduced the time a government with a majority had to pass laws before facing a new election.

In practice this meant that the Lords could expect to delay legislation for a minimum period of two years, assuming that the proposals were immediately passed again by the Commons after each rejection. The Lords resisted this to the bitter end but to no avail. The death of King Edward VII in May 1910 gave them a temporary respite since Asquith was anxious not to appear to be pressing the new king, George V, too soon on the question of creating new peers. However, the delay was brief and by the end of 1910 Asquith was ready to call a second election, this time armed with the mandate to create as many new peers as might be necessary to see the Parliament Bill through.

Key dates

Parliament Bill introduced but rejected by House of Lords: 1910

Parliament Act passed: 1911

The result of the general election of December 1910 produced no real change in the political balance. The Irish and Labour both advanced marginally to 84 and 42 seats respectively; the Liberals and Unionists tied on 272 seats each. This left the government in a position to force through the bill.

In August 1911, after Asquith had publicly threatened a mass creation of peers, the Parliament Bill was finally passed. Even then some of the moderate Unionist peers had to be drafted in to vote for the government in order to ensure that the bill was not voted down by the 'last-ditchers', some of whom by now had so lost their grip on reality that they preferred to bring the Lords to a 'glorious death' rather than relent.

Attempts at compromise

The constitutional crisis was a classic case of political miscalculations that led to political passions running out of control. This was most obviously the case on the Unionist side, but the government had also miscalculated the impact that the Budget would have. Asquith was eventually forced into threatening a mass creation of peers that was very much against his inclination. Lloyd George raised passions to fever pitch during the summer of 1909 with highly provocative speeches designed to whip up support for the Budget and put pressure on the Lords.

However, despite his revolutionary utterances, Lloyd George was not really intent on destroying the wealthy classes. On the contrary, during the same period, he was employing his considerable abilities to the task of becoming wealthy himself through various business interests. During 1910 the political leaders on both sides had tried, behind the scenes, to control and restore some order to the situation.

Between June and November 1910, a series of meetings was held between the Liberal and Unionist leaders aimed at finding a compromise. This process, known as the 'Constitutional Conference', failed in the end to find a solution but it was a sign that both sides had realised that things were getting out of hand.

In August, Lloyd George proposed a coalition government be set up, with an agenda covering all the major issues of the day – economic, social and constitutional – so as to seek compromise solutions for them all. Balfour was much attracted to this idea in theory, but doubted whether it was practical given the political climate. Asquith was also interested, but both leaders found a hostile response within their parties and the scheme came to nothing.

The results of the constitutional crisis

The outcome of the constitutional crisis was scarcely revolutionary.

- Its most immediate effect was to make the Liberal Government more dependent on the Irish Nationalists.
- It did not result in a flood of legislation needing to be forced through the Lords since the government's reforms since 1906 had already been extensive.

- Its chief victim was Balfour, who paid the penalty for a failed campaign that he had never wanted in the first place. Late in 1911, faced with mounting criticism of his leadership, he decided upon a dignified stepping down rather than await the inevitable and distasteful *coup*. He was succeeded by the relatively unknown Andrew Bonar Law, who had entered Parliament only in 1900, and whose chief qualification was that he was a compromise candidate at a time when other leading contenders, if chosen, might have split the party.
- The crisis cost the Liberals their overall majority and exposed them to the demands of the Irish Nationalists. The reputations of their leaders, particularly Asquith and Lloyd George, were enhanced, but the necessity of dealing with Irish Home Rule meant that the government was bound to face a new constitutional crisis almost immediately.
- It should be remembered, however, that Home Rule was not a new policy for the Liberals. It had not been forced on them by the Irish Nationalists – it had been an official party commitment for over 20 years.

4 | The Women's Suffrage Campaign

Key question
How did the women's suffrage campaign develop throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century?

One constitutional issue that the Liberals failed to resolve was the difficult matter of the claim of women to be able to vote in parliamentary elections. On the surface it appeared to be a fairly straightforward matter of basic logic and individual rights.

The nineteenth century

During the second half of the nineteenth century women had made steady, if unspectacular, progress in legal and educational emancipation. The employment of women in clerical posts had expanded enormously and they had even made some inroads in the professions. An obvious target for similar progress was political rights.

The question of granting the parliamentary franchise to women on the same terms as men in borough seats was raised during the passage of the 1867 Reform Act. Although rejected, the inconsistency of a system that granted votes to men, who might in their turn be employed by women, was obvious enough. During the course of the nineteenth century they did, however, gain some political rights:

Men's electoral rights
By 1884 all male householders could vote, as could men with educational or professional qualifications who were not householders in their own right.

- In 1869 women gained the vote in town council elections in the **municipal boroughs**.
- In 1870 they gained the right to be elected to the School Boards set up under the Education Act.
- From 1875 women could be elected to serve as Poor Law Guardians running the local workhouses.
- In 1889 they were included in the local government franchise, although they did not have the right to take office on the new County and County Borough Councils.

Key term
Municipal boroughs
Boroughs with the right to elect their own town councils under an Act of 1835.

Suffrage groups

The NSWS

The first properly organised group to campaign nationally for the right of women to vote was the National Society for Women's Suffrage (NSWS) formed in 1868. It was an amalgamation of locally based groups that had developed during the 1860s. This group split up in 1888 because some members wanted to affiliate to the Liberal Party while others wanted to be independent of party politics. However, in 1897 a new body was formed that was able to reunite the old NSWS members and bring in various other women's suffrage groups which had been springing up randomly.

The NUWSS

This new organisation was known as the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). By 1900 the NUWSS had some 400 branches all over the country and appeared to be a united and forceful pressure group. However, there was a new divisive issue waiting to bring further discord to their campaign.

There were two different approaches among those who wished to see the political emancipation of women. Some argued for the immediate inclusion of women in the franchise on exactly the same terms as men. Others wished to press for the right of all men and women over the age of 21 to vote. There was a danger in this second option from the women's point of view. This was the fear that it was so radical that it might lead to compromises such as had happened with the gradual enfranchisement of men. If this happened one possible outcome might be that all men might get the vote but no women. Once that position had been established women arguably might find it even more difficult to secure the parliamentary vote.

Key date

Women's Social and Political Union formed: 1903

The WSPU

The difference of opinion led to a split within the ranks of the NUWSS. Emmeline Pankhurst, a widow whose husband had been a long-time Liberal campaigner for women's rights, formed a new movement called the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in 1903. Mrs Pankhurst took the view that women should have immediate equality with men in the existing system of voting qualifications. Once this was achieved, attention could turn to campaigning for full democracy.

Mrs Pankhurst had already broken her political connection with the Liberals, in favour of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) (see Chapter 5) believing it to be a better vehicle for her aims of economic and social equality for women. Now, assisted by her daughters, Christabel and Sylvia, she mobilised the WSPU to press the issue of the female suffrage within the ILP.

The relationship between the WSPU and ILP

The problem for the Pankhursts was that the ILP was itself divided over the issue. Most of the leaders were genuinely in favour of the basic idea of the right of women to vote. However,

some ILP leaders, such as Keir Hardie, were sympathetic to the Pankhursts' demand for immediate female suffrage on equal terms with men, while others, such as Philip Snowden, later to be a Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, preferred to wait for complete adult suffrage.

Whichever view they took, the ILP leaders were also uncomfortably aware of the extent of hostility to female equality among working-class males, particularly within the trade unions, for whom female equality in the workplace was unthinkable. In 1905, Keir Hardie introduced a private member's bill to extend the vote to women on the existing franchise. This was the highpoint of WSPU/ILP collaboration and Mrs Pankhurst worked with Keir Hardie to promote the bill. Its defeat was certain, however, and the lack of real enthusiasm for it within the ILP rank and file members left the Pankhursts disappointed and disillusioned.

The WSPU still helped Labour candidates in the 1906 general election campaign but this only increased their anger as some Labour candidates rejected their help while others made it clear that they expected them to restrict their activities to making tea and passing around refreshments at meetings. Mrs Pankhurst was now convinced that women must seize the initiative themselves and secure their own political destiny.

The Liberals' view on female suffrage

Key question
How did the Liberals react to the issue of 'votes for women'?

When the Liberals came to power in 1905, they were also divided over female suffrage. Some, still following Gladstone's views, were opposed to it altogether while others, although sympathetic, were uncertain how best to proceed. For the Liberals the dilemma was that any kind of piecemeal or gradual enfranchisement of women based on property qualifications seemed most likely to benefit the Unionists. The results of granting full adult suffrage were difficult to assess, especially with the Labour Party's ultimate political appeal still an unknown quantity.

In the 1906 election, many Liberal candidates expressed their support for female suffrage, raising hopes among women campaigners that legislation might soon materialise. This was a false hope. In reality the Liberal Government had no intention, in 1906, of risking a political controversy over female suffrage. The most they would do was to remove the obvious anomaly of the exclusion of women from sitting on local councils, by passing the Qualification of Women Act of 1907. This was naturally welcomed by the WSPU, but it hardly constituted a great leap forward, nor was it an acceptable commitment for the future.

Militancy

Frustrated by the lack of progress, the WSPU became more militant. Harassment of politicians at meetings, already employed during the 1906 campaign, was intensified. From such traditional tactics the WSPU graduated to:

- attacks on property: window smashing, arson

- the destruction of mail: pepper-filled letters were dispatched to politicians to provide a literally irritating reminder to the recipients of the women's displeasure with the lack of progress.

The more aggressive the WSPU became however, the harder any kind of concession became for the government, as it could not be seen to be giving in to violence. The more entrenched the government's position became the more intense the anger of the women became. The WSPU militants became known as 'suffragettes', a female-only term to distinguish them from the more moderate male and female 'suffragist' campaigners. Criminal proceedings resulted in imprisonments that led to hunger strikes, which in turn led the prison authorities to resort to force-feeding. It was an embarrassing state of affairs for any government, especially one calling itself 'Liberal', but, as with the constitutional crisis itself, neither side had a great deal of room for manoeuvre.

The Conciliation Bill

Following the pattern of the Lord–Commons clash (see pages 66–8), both sides tried to extricate themselves from the mess. After the campaign leading up to the 1910 general election, during which Liberal ministers had come in for some rough treatment at the hands of women activists, the WSPU called for a truce in the hope that the gesture would ease the deadlock.

Parliament, rather than the government, responded with a 'Conciliation' Bill drafted by an all-party committee. It proposed the enfranchisement of women, on the basis of either a householder or an occupation franchise, which would have meant in practice nearly eight per cent of women getting the vote. On its second reading, this proposal had a majority of 110. The WSPU welcomed the bill and had high hopes that it was the long-awaited breakthrough.

However, the bill was doomed to failure because some leading Cabinet ministers opposed it from the start:

- Asquith was against it: he was not a supporter of female suffrage anyway and had been deeply angered by the militancy of the recent campaigns. To him, concessions now smacked of giving in to fanatics.
- Other leading Liberals, like Lloyd George, were against it because they saw it as enfranchising the most conservative-minded sections of women and in the long run damaging to the Liberals' electoral chances.

It is only fair to point out that Sylvia Pankhurst, the most socialist-minded of the Pankhurst family, who now focused mainly on her work among the poor of East London, also doubted the wisdom of the bill for this same reason. Asquith's opposition ended the hopes for a Conciliation Bill in 1910. He made vague promises of a government bill to replace it but would not commit himself to a timetable.

The loss of the Conciliation Bill ended the truce that had been declared by the WSPU. There was a mass demonstration and some violent episodes at the end of 1910, after which the truce was resumed in the hope of a fresh initiative. Asquith's next move, however, was to announce, at the end of 1911, the introduction of a Franchise Bill in the next session of Parliament. This was to be aimed at full adult male suffrage. The WSPU was incensed and, from this point onwards, the bitter confrontation between them and the government continued until the outbreak of the First World War, when the Pankhursts changed tack by adopting a patriotic line, and pressing for the full participation of women in the war effort. In the meantime, the government withdrew the Franchise Bill and opted for the abolition of plural voting instead (see page 65).

In this propaganda item published in London in 1912, a suffragist on hunger strike is being force fed through the nose.

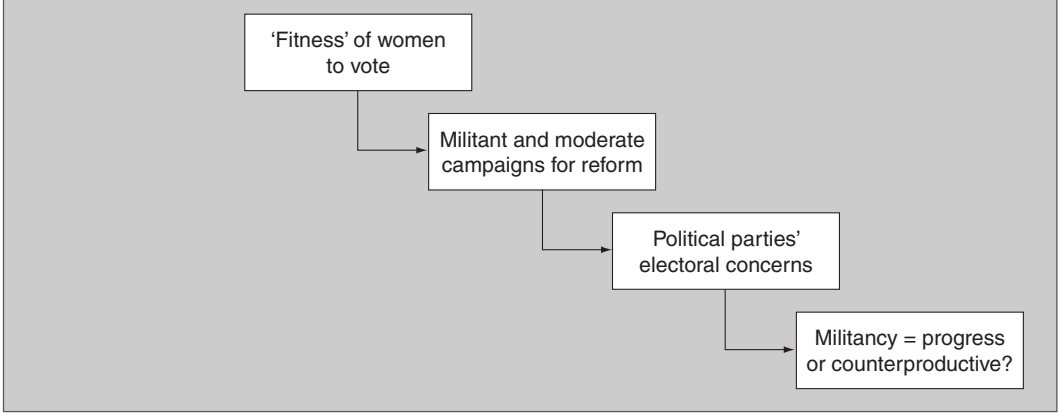
Deadlock

The failure to make progress on female suffrage, the deterioration of the campaign into terrorism and the dubious morality of the government's tactics made this a grim and discreditable episode in political life before the First World War. The government was reduced to 'illiberal' expedients such as the 'Cat and Mouse' Act of 1913, under which women on hunger strike were released and then rearrested, to try to control the situation.

Key date
'Cat and Mouse' Act: 1913

The WSPU leaders became hunted refugees and Christabel Pankhurst fled to Paris to continue her direction of operations. The main blame for the situation, as it existed by 1914, must lie with Asquith, as Prime Minister, because he had passed over the chance to engineer some kind of compromise out of the Conciliation Bill in 1910. A lesser responsibility lies with the leadership of the WSPU for allowing their campaign to get so far out of hand that their actions began to blur the essential justice of their demands.

Summary diagram: The women's suffrage campaign



Study Guide: AS Questions

In the style of AQA

(a) Explain why the House of Lords rejected the 'People's Budget' in November 1909. (12 marks)

(b) 'The welfare reforms of the Liberal governments between 1906 and 1911 created a welfare state in Britain.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. (24 marks)

Exam tips

(a) You might begin with a sentence to explain what the 1909 budget proposed, both in general terms and more precisely. Try to identify the new taxes individually and then consider why the Lords objected to each. You should offer both broad and more precise reasons for the Lords' hostility to the budget and should set your factors in the context of the Liberal Government since 1906. Try to show how they link together and provide an overall judgement.

(b) To answer this question you will need to define a 'welfare state'. The easiest definition might be a state that provides for the well-being of all its citizens. By offering such a definition at the outset, it becomes easier to debate the extent to which the welfare reforms of the Liberal governments lived up to this. Try to look at individual reforms and consider their strengths and weaknesses. You should recognise the positive aspects of the legislation while acknowledging that it did not actually provide for all. Make sure you offer a clearly defined judgement that fits with the balance of the evidence which you supply in the answer.

In the style of OCR A

Study the five sources on militancy and women's suffrage from 1906 to 1914, and then answer **both** sub-questions. It is recommended that you spend two-thirds of your time in answering part **(b)**.

(a) Study Sources B and D.
Compare these sources as evidence for the attitudes towards militancy. (30 marks)

(b) Study all the sources.
Use your own knowledge to assess how far the sources support the interpretation that militancy did more harm than good to the cause of women's suffrage during the period 1906–14. (70 marks)

Source A

From: W.L. Blease, The Emancipation of English Women*, published in 1910. The views of a male supporter of women's suffrage are explained.*

It is useless to talk about the equal worth of women, as long as men exercise their power to exclude them from any activity they may wish to enter. It is useless to declare they are willing to admit women into everything except politics. In England, where politics is so important, disfranchisement brands the disfranchised with a permanent mark of inferiority. An adult who is unfit to take part in politics will inevitably be made to feel inferior in education, in professional and industrial employments, and in social relations.

Source B

From: Millicent Fawcett in a private letter, 1910. A leading suffragist, writing to a friend, criticises the militant actions of the WSPU.

I do think these personal assaults of the past five years are extraordinarily silly. The prime minister's statement on the possibility of a bill for women's suffrage was not exactly all we wanted. But it was better than anything offered before. It made *The Times* say the next day that it would put the women's suffrage question definitely before the country at the coming general election, and that if there is a Liberal majority it will be a mandate to the government to grant women the vote. And then these idiots go out smashing windows and bashing ministers' hats over their eyes.

Source C

From: The Clarion*, published in 1913. A pro-suffragette Labour newspaper comments on the Liberal Government's actions.*

The women are winning again. Morale is high. What they lost by window-smashing has been restored to them by the Government's new Cat and Mouse Act rushed through Parliament. Consider what it means. The Spanish Inquisition never invented anything so cruel! 'Wait-and-See Asquith' has tried both force and trickery against them. But the fact is undeniable that the bravery of the women has beaten him.

Source D

From: Emmeline Pankhurst, My Own Story*, published in 1914. A suffragette leader defends the growing militancy of the WSPU.*

In the year 1906 there was an immensely large public opinion in favour of women's suffrage. But what good did that do the cause? We called upon the public for more than sympathy. We called upon it to give women votes. We have tried every means, including processions and meetings, which were not successful. We have tried demonstrations, and now at last we have to break windows. I wish I had broken more. I am not in the least sorry.

Source E

From: Viscount Ullswater, A Speaker's Commentaries*, published in 1925. James Lowther (later Viscount Ullswater) comments on the effects of suffragette violence on Parliament's attitude to the women's cause. Lowther was the speaker of the House of Commons during the period of suffragette militancy. He had been a Conservative MP and was opposed to women's suffrage.*

By 1913, the activities of the militant suffragettes had reached a stage at which nothing was safe from their attacks. The feeling in the House of Commons, caused by these lawless actions, hardened the opposition to the demands of the suffragettes. As a result, on 6 May the private member's bill that would have given women the vote, for which the government had promised parliamentary time so that it could become law, was rejected by the House of Commons by a majority of 47.

Exam tips

(a) Focus on and refer to the issue of the 'attitudes' shown in the two sources. Avoid being drawn into a general account of the different approaches of suffragists and suffragettes disconnected from the source material. The key issue to focus on is the question of the attitude to militancy in terms of what it might achieve. Clearly, Source B sees this in negative terms and argues that the progress being made, while not as great as might be desired, is still progress and is compromised by the actions of 'idiots'. Source D argues to the contrary, seeing militancy as the only way to achieve the desired outcome. It is valid to consider the origins of the source in the comparison to the extent that they come from different years. Source B is a private letter in response to events in 1910 when there were two general elections and hopes for a breakthrough of sorts were high, whereas Source D was written for publication to justify militancy and comes from 1914 when these hopes had still come to nothing.

(b) 'Assess how far' is telling you to come up with a balanced judgement of your own.

- Make sure you use all the sources and the information in them both in their own terms and as a basis of elaborating your own knowledge.
- Group the sources according to what they say and construct a thematic answer.
- Be clear where you are using your own knowledge to add to the detail contained in the sources.
- Make sure you focus your comments on the 'more harm than good' issue and that you have a clear view on this.
- Try to classify the overall position of each: Sources A, B and E see militancy negatively; Sources C and D see it more positively.
- Try also to sum up the overall balance of the evidence. Use the origin of the sources and your own knowledge in combination, where you can, to shed light on the value of the evidence. For example, it could be argued that Source E is particularly useful because its evidence comes with the benefit of hindsight in 1925 when women have actually gained the vote and the debate has become somewhat academic as a consequence. The other sources are part of the actual campaign period and as such possibly reflect the passions roused by the events rather more than Source E.

In the style of OCR B

Answer **both** parts of your chosen question.

(a) Why did the Lords reject the 1909 Budget? [Explaining motives, intentions and actions.] (25 marks)

(b) How is suffragette militancy best explained? [Explaining attitudes, motives and actions.] (25 marks)

Exam tips

Revise the General Introduction at the start of the Study Guide to Chapter 2 (page 39).

(a) Start in the intentional mode because this question is about explaining motives, and then shift to the empathetic mode to show the influence of ideas/attitudes and the causal mode to explain events. As your essay grows, make sure you make judgements about the relative importance of various factors; ranking the differing reasons so that you provide a full answer to the question.

Your plan could have two sets of circles of explanation, grouped around immediate and longer-term causes. Alternatively, your essay could be built thematically around the various issues involved (opposition to New Liberalism, hostility to the tax costs of the social programme in the 1909 budget, opposition of the powerful brewing industry to the increases in duty on spirits, hostility of the very rich to major increases in death duties; not forgetting the budget as another stage in the on-going political battle over free trade vs protection). Equally, you should consider the extent to which either side was 'looking to pick a fight' (the ability of the Unionists to challenge the government in the Lords when it was so powerless in the Commons; the determination of radicals like Lloyd George and Churchill to break the power of the Lords). There had been a series of clashes between Lords and Commons during 1906–8. Disputes on such a scale had not happened for nearly a century. Were they caused by the nature of the bills or by party politics? Remember that clash was magnified both by the scale of the Unionist weakness in the Commons and the Liberals weakness in the Lords. As late as 1908 the Liberals had no plans to reform the House of Lords, and the party was badly divided on how to respond to the growing challenges of the Lords to their policies. In that climate, did Lloyd George deliberately design the 1909 budget to be unacceptable and force a showdown with the Lords on a clear issue that could break their blockade and prevent it happening again? That often seems to be the key question, but do not overlook another budget element: tax increases to fund a major increase in the navy to meet rising German power. Remember too that, at first, the Unionists did not plan to reject the budget: their tipping point seems to have been the need to defend the protectionist position against a major shift towards free trade.

(b) Your circles must build an intentional and empathetic explanation, linking both together to show how best we can understand this phenomenon. Given the question 'How … best explained?', you must build an evaluation of the relative importance of the various reasons into your circles of explanation, or your answer won't be complete.

You might start with the key point that the women's suffrage campaigners were never united and that not all supporters of female suffrage were militant. Were the reasons specific to the WSPU? One set of circles of explanation must engage with Mrs Pankhurst and her daughters, their motives and their influence. Frustration with all the political parties was one important factor. Failure to secure electoral commitments in 1905–6 certainly encouraged greater militancy, despite the 1907 Qualifications Act. One circle needs to consider the key question of whether militancy created a spiral of greater frustration that the breakthrough had not been achieved, which in turn generated even greater militancy. While the government mishandled the problem, it certainly responded to militancy by becoming more stubborn. The significance of events in 1910–11 must be weighed in another circle: the 'double whammy' of the failure of the 1910 Conciliation Bill and the proposal in 1911 to grant full adult male suffrage. Was this the real turning point? In explaining rising pro-suffrage violence, examine whether the WSPU lost control of its membership to a radical wing or whether the WSPU deliberately encouraged violence. Your other core circle of explanation needs to consider the balance of influence between: (i) government bungling that made things worse and (ii) the desperate feeling that all legitimate avenues had been tried so, in a righteous cause, no other option remained. Your assessment of that will depend on whether you argue that militancy is best explained by reference to Asquith or Pankhurst.

5 The Rise of the Labour Party 1890–1924

POINTS TO CONSIDER

During the course of the twentieth century the Labour Party emerged as one of the two great political parties in Britain competing for power with the Conservatives. Its rise was accompanied by the decline of the Liberal Party. This chapter will consider the question of whether the Labour Party from its origins showed signs that it was destined to achieve its later status or whether it simply benefited from events. It will do this through the following themes:

- The origins of the Labour Party
- The Labour Party in the Commons 1906–14
- The trade unions and industrial unrest 1910–14
- The Labour Party and the First World War 1914–18
- From war to government
- The fall of the first Labour Government

Key dates

1884	Creation of the Social Democratic Federation Creation of the Fabian Society Creation of the Socialist League
1893	Creation of the Independent Labour Party
1900	Setting up of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC)
1903	Electoral pact agreed between the LRC and the Liberal Party
1906	LRC wins 29 seats in the general election Foundation of the Labour Party
1906–9	Labour supports Liberal reforms
1910	Labour loses seats in January general election
1911–13	Industrial unrest
1915	Arthur Henderson, the leader of the Labour Party, joins the Coalition Cabinet
1916	Henderson joins Lloyd George's War Cabinet – a number of Labour MPs become junior ministers
1917	Henderson resigns and is replaced by a former Labour leader, George Barnes
1918	New Labour Party Constitution is approved and the Party decides to oppose the coalition government general election

1924	January	First Labour Government takes office
	July	The 'Campbell case'
1924	October	The 'Zinoviev letter'
	October	Labour lose office

Key question
Why did a Labour Party develop in this period?

1 | The Origins of the Labour Party 1890–1906

The immediate origins of the Labour Party before 1890 are to be found in the 1880s in the development of what some historians have termed the 'Socialist Revival'. This term describes a renewed interest in the principles of socialism that was marked by the founding of political groups dedicated in general to socialist ideas.

During the 1840s the working-class political movement known as the Chartists had emerged demanding political rights for all adult men and arguing for a fairer distribution of wealth. Not all Chartists were socialists but the movement unquestionably embraced some of the principles of socialism. With the collapse of Chartism in the late 1840s, however, and the onset of better social conditions in the 1850s, the steam went out of both working-class political protest in general and the appeal of socialist principles. However, by the 1880s socialism and the idea that British politics needed a separate working-class political party that would promote the ideas of socialism were very much back under discussion. The reasons for this were as follows:

- The ideas of Karl Marx as outlined in his work *Capital* published in 1867 were attracting some attention. Originally written in German and entitled *Das Kapital*, *Capital* was translated into English in the 1870s. Marx was a German revolutionary, who advanced the idea that human society operated according to scientific principles. Just as the physical universe was governed by the laws of chemistry and physics so, too, the behaviour of human beings was determined by social laws. These could be scientifically studied and applied. Marx claimed that the critical determinant of human behaviour was **class struggle**, a process that operated throughout history.
- From around 1870, a series of economic slumps hit some sections of the working classes severely.
- In 1867 a Reform Act meant that more working-class men were able to vote.
- Although the material conditions of the working classes were generally improving, the gap between them and the middle and upper classes continued to increase.
- Although both the Liberal Party and the Conservatives tried to appeal to the working classes there was no real scope for working-class participation in either party. The Liberal Party claimed to be the natural party of the working classes but working-class men found it difficult to be accepted as prospective MPs for the Party.

Key term
Class struggle
A continuing conflict at every stage of history between those who possessed economic and political power and those who did not, in simple terms the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

The formation of political groups

In 1884 three separate groups were formed to push for greater working-class participation in the political system.

The SDF

The Social Democratic Federation (SDF) was a **Marxist** group that aimed to promote class hostility and an eventual revolution to take over political power. It was founded by an ex-Tory, Eton-educated stockbroker, H.M. Hyndman, who converted to Marxism after reading *Das Kapital*.

The Fabians

The Fabians were a small middle-class group of intellectuals who favoured working towards socialism gradually through the existing parliamentary system. They took their name from the Roman general Fabius Maximus, who was known for his cautious approach to military conflict, preferring patient sieges to bloody head-on battles. Playwright George Bernard Shaw was a founder member, along with a civil servant, Sidney Webb, and his wife Beatrice. Sidney Webb eventually went on to write the influential *Labour and the New Social Order* (1918) and inspire the Labour Party's revised constitution in the same year (see page 96).

The Socialist League

The Socialist League was initially an offshoot of the SDF. It was founded by William Morris, who differed from Hyndman in his view of the nature of a future socialist society. Essentially however the group was Marxist in tone and Morris agreed with Hyndman that a revolution was the only way to bring about socialism.

The ILP

The 1880s and 1890s was a time of increasing economic difficulty with unemployment and hardship causing serious unrest. In 1886, during a severe winter, an SDF open-air meeting to protest about unemployment turned into a riot. In November 1887, Trafalgar Square in the centre of London was taken over by groups of the unemployed. When the police baton-charged the demonstrators, over 200 people were injured.

In 1893 the Independent Labour Party (ILP) was formed. Its founder was James Keir Hardie. It was based on three important sources of influence:

- **Radical liberalism**, which found the traditional Liberal Party too conservative and capitalist based.
- Trade unionism, which was becoming increasingly political.
- Nonconformity, which was coming increasingly to link Christianity with politics. As Keir Hardie, himself a strong Nonconformist, put it, 'the final goal of socialism is a form of social economy, very strongly akin to the principles set forth in the Sermon on the Mount.'

The ILP was formed as a national organisation out of 'Labour' groups that had been springing up around the country. In 1894 it

Key dates

Creation of the Social Democratic Federation: 1884

Creation of the Fabian Society: 1884

Creation of the Socialist League: 1884

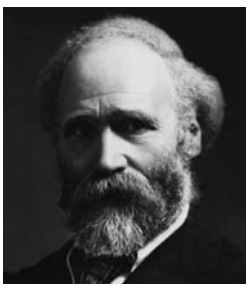
Creation of the ILP: 1893

Key terms

Marxist
Followers of the ideas of Karl Marx, who argued that revolution was required in order to overthrow capitalism and create a classless socialist society.

Radical liberalism
Liberals who wanted significant changes to the existing social system in order to directly benefit the working classes.

gained an important recruit in James Ramsay MacDonald, a warehouse clerk, who had turned to journalism and who would go on the become the first Labour Prime Minister in 1924. However, it is important not to exaggerate the impact of the ILP. Its strength was limited to particular areas and its peak membership in 1895 was 35,000. In 1895, it put up 28 candidates at the general election though none was elected.



Profile: James Keir Hardie 1856–1915

1856 – Born in Lanarkshire
1886 – Became Secretary of the Scottish Miners' Federation
1892 – Became an MP
1893 – Founded the ILP
1900 – Helped to set up the LRC
1906 – Became chairman of the Labour Party
1914 – Retired from being chairman of the Labour Party
1915 – Died

Background and early career

Hardie was born in Lanarkshire, Scotland, in 1856 and originally worked in the mines from the age of seven until he was 24 years old. Largely self-educated he escaped the life of a miner through trade union work, becoming Secretary of the Scottish Miners' Federation in 1886. He became a journalist, founding and editing *The Labour Leader*. In 1892 he became the MP for the Welsh mining constituency of Merthyr Tydfil. The following year he founded the Independent Labour Party (ILP), and became its leader.

Later career

In 1895 Hardie was defeated in the general election but in 1900 he was re-elected at Merthyr Tydfil. In 1900 he played a major role in setting up the Labour Representation Committee and became its leader. Once the Labour Party officially formed in 1906 he became its first chairman and in effect its leader.

As leader he championed many ideas that were not always widely popular. He was a committed Christian, a Nonconformist with uncompromising views about alcohol, which he regarded as an evil influence on working-class self-improvement. He was a strong enthusiast for education at a time when many working-class activists and trade unionists saw it as an irrelevance. He was also an outspoken advocate of the right of women to vote and women's rights in general. He was not a particularly skilful politician in terms of diplomacy. He often failed to see that being less outspoken might help win over opponents gradually.

When the First World War broke out in 1914, his pacifist views left him with no option but to retire from his leading position in the Party. He died in 1915, his health having been broken by his distress at the war. Although he died too soon to serve in any high office, it is not unreasonable to regard him as having done more than any other individual, by the time of his death, to make the Labour Party a credible force in British politics.

The creation of the LRC

Key question
Why was the LRC formed in 1900?

The single most important development in the formation of the Labour Party came in 1900 and it was the trade unions who sponsored it. Angered by increasing aggression on the part of employers in the tough economic climate of the 1890s the trade unions decided that more direct political action was needed.

At the Trades Union Congress (TUC) annual conference of 1899 the railwaymen's union put forward a resolution that a further conference should be held for the purpose of 'securing a better representation of the interests of labour in the House of Commons'. A clear, if not overwhelming, majority carried the resolution. Accordingly 129 delegates assembled in London in February 1900.

The TUC, inexperienced in political action, invited the SDF, the Fabians and the ILP to send delegates. The ILP took the lead. Recognising the basic conservatism of the trade unions, Hardie steered the delegates away from the firebrand politics of the SDF, while at the same time blocking the idea that some trade unionists had that working-class MPs, once elected, should confine themselves to particular 'labour issues' only.

A committee was established to work towards the formation of a 'distinct Labour group in Parliament who shall have their own **whips** and agree upon their own policy'. Hardie hoped to call the new organisation the 'United Labour Party' but this was considered too controversial and in the end the conference agreed on the title 'Labour Representation Committee' (LRC) as safer. It was, however, the foundation of the Labour Party in everything but name.

Key term

Whips
MPs who within their own political party, ensure that the other MPs vote according to the wishes of the party leadership. If the party is in government, the whips are paid members of the government.

LRC support

Key dates

Setting up of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC): 1900

Electoral pact agreed between the LRC and the Liberal Party: 1903

From the start, the new organisation was determined to put political realities ahead of ideology. Fearful that the term 'socialist' was too radical in its implications, and aware that the trade unions were not entirely comfortable with it, the LRC began to use the term 'socialistic', meaning broadly sympathetic to socialist ideas, but not rigidly committed to doctrines such as state ownership.

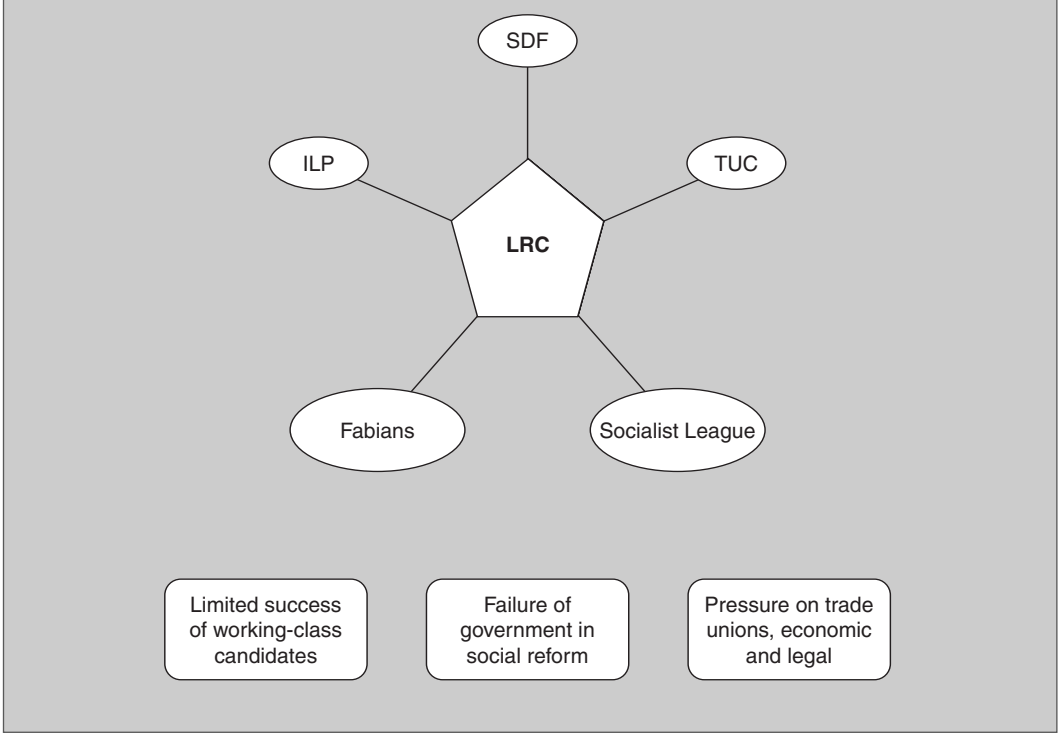
Moreover the LRC was open to active collaboration with outside groups, not least the Liberal Party. An electoral pact was agreed between them in 1903. This was an agreement to avoid running candidates against each other in constituencies where a split vote between them might result in the election of a Conservative candidate (see page 36).

The LRC received a huge, if in some ways unwelcome, boost in 1901 in the form of the Taff Vale judgement. The railwaymen's union, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, had called strikes to try to force the employers to grant formal recognition of the union. In response the Taff Vale Railway Company sued the union for damages. On appeal, the House of Lords found in favour of the employers and awarded substantial damages plus costs against the union. This sent shock waves through the trade

Key date
LRC wins 29 seats in the general election: 1906

unions as a whole. Previously cautious and sceptical unions who had steered away from involvement with the LRC were converted. A total of 127 unions joined the LRC as a direct result of the Taff Vale verdict, lifting total membership from 353,000 to 847,000. The unions levied the members for funds to support the LRC and it was able to secure the election of 29 MPs at the 1906 general election.

Summary diagram: The origins of the Labour Party 1895–1906



Key question
How important was the role of the Labour Party in 1906–14?

2 | The Labour Party in the Commons 1906–14

Key date
Foundation of the Labour Party by uniting LRC, Miners' MPs and Independent Labour MPs in the House of Commons: 1906

The title 'Labour Party' was formally adopted in 1906. Following the general election the MPs elected as LRC candidates (29), Miners' Union candidates (21) and Independents (two) (in effect, all those sitting specifically to represent working-class interests) informally agreed to act as a single parliamentary party with 52 MPs. Even so, the miners' MPs did not officially merge with the Labour Party until 1908 and when they did so it was seen as marking a clear change in the political weight of the party.

The 1906–10 Parliament

The extent of the influence of the Labour Party in the Parliament of 1906–10 is controversial:

- **'Labour' historians** tend to emphasise the importance of the Labour Party by suggesting that it encouraged or even forced the Liberals to adopt policies directly favourable to the working class.
- **'Marxist' historians** see the Party as abandoning socialist principles and collaborating with the capitalist employers.
- Other historians argue that the Party was not strong enough to have any decisive influence on the decisions taken by the Liberal Government.

It is clear that the Liberal Government was committed to a policy of extensive reforms when it came to power. It is equally clear that the official policy of the Labour Party differed little in essence from that of the Liberal Party. The electoral pact arrangement of 1903 (see page 36), even though it was a secret and informal agreement, meant that both parties had to produce compatible manifestos for the 1906 general election. These had to be designed to be acceptable to a range of potential voters, who, in vital constituencies were expected to support a candidate who would, in effect, be representing both parties.

The subsequent role of the Labour Party has therefore been discussed primarily in relation to those reforms that most directly affected the interests of the working class. The problem with this is that so much of the Liberals' legislation was centred on the welfare of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. In assessing these reforms it is difficult to establish that the presence of the Labour Party MPs had any decisive effect on the legislation involved. The fact that they supported it, encouraged it or even took a part in its formulation is not in itself evidence that such reforms would not have taken place without them.

The following key examples illustrate the point.

The Trades Disputes Act 1906

This Act is often seen as direct evidence for the influence of the Labour Party since it changed the law to protect trade unions involved in strike action from being sued for damages by employers, i.e. it reversed the Taff Vale verdict of 1901 (see pages 88–9). However, it is important to remember that the need for a change in the law had been accepted by both the Liberal Party and the Unionist Party in the years after 1901. The Balfour government initially rejected calls for a change in the law but then had a rethink and set up a Royal Commission to look into the issue. The only doubt thereafter was whether the law should be reformed to allow full or only partial protection for union funds. The Liberal Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman favoured full protection.

Despite this, owing to the concerns of other Cabinet ministers, the Liberal Government originally proposed a bill offering partial immunity for unions. The Labour Party countered this with its

Key terms

Labour historians Historians who generally see the rise of the Labour Party as an inevitable (and welcome) process.

Marxist historians Historians whose interpretations are based on the premise that social class and economic factors are the driving forces of history and that society will ultimately be a classless co-operative one.

own bill offering full immunity. Campbell-Bannerman, entirely on his own initiative, then committed the government to accepting the Labour version, which totally accorded with his own view and indeed the views of many Liberal backbenchers who had actually championed such an option during the general election campaign.

The Education (Provision of Meals) Act 1906

The momentum for this measure, which gave direct aid for malnourished schoolchildren, was much greater before 1906 than is generally acknowledged. The Balfour Government, responding to pressure inside and outside Parliament, had issued an order for 'destitute' schoolchildren to be fed through the Poor Law, but this proved difficult to administer. In any case the term 'destitute' strictly only covered those children who were totally without means of support.

The Liberals favoured direct legislation to address the problem, but had not devised a specific proposal at the time of the 1906 general election. When a newly elected Labour MP brought forward a Private Member's Bill authorising Local Education Authorities to feed 'needy' children using rate money, the Liberal Government seized on the proposal and made it government policy. This was a Labour initiative most certainly, but was hardly imposed on the government.

Key question
What led to the Party's decline in political power?

Divisions in the Labour Party

The picture that therefore emerges tends to support the view that while the Labour Party did try to put pressure on the Liberal Government between 1906 and 1910, the government's responses were dictated by its own agenda. This picture is reinforced by the fact that the Labour Party itself was a broadly based organisation with no clear commitment to a full programme of socialism. In 1908, Ben Tillett, a member of the Independent Labour Party, which still maintained a separate identity within the Party as a whole, published a pamphlet entitled *Is the Parliamentary Labour Party a Failure?* which criticised the moderate line the party was adopting. This was followed up in 1910 by an even more critical, alternative election manifesto, put forward by the ILP, entitled 'Let us Reform the Labour Party', which called for a shared platform with the Marxist Social Democratic Federation.

Divisions in the Labour Party ran deep. Issues such as the female suffrage created significant problems. The idea of women voting was not popular among many trade unionists. Working-class men were generally among the least sympathetic elements to the idea. Hostility towards the militant suffragettes was probably greater among these groups than any other. However, the more committed socialists (especially Keir Hardie of the ILP) were passionately committed to the cause of women's suffrage. In the general election of 1906, serious disputes arose in some constituencies over whether LRC candidates should accept help from suffragette activists in their election campaigns.

FORCED FELLOWSHIP.

SUSPICIOUS-LOOKING PARTY. "ANY OBJECTION TO MY COMPANY, GUV'NOR? I'M AGOIN' YOUR WAY"—(*aside*) "AND FURTHER."

What message is this cartoon projecting? How accurate is its representation of the relationship between Liberalism and Labour?

The 1910 general elections

From 1910 the situation at Westminster changed dramatically and the change did not favour the position of the Labour Party. In the general election of January 1910 the Labour Party fielded only 70 candidates. This was partly the result of fears about financial problems resulting from the Osborne Judgement of 1909, which had made trade union contribution to political parties illegal. The Osborne Judgement was reversed in 1913 by the Trade Union Act, but in the meantime the Labour Party faced a cash-flow crisis. The result of the election was that 40 Labour MPs were elected – all from constituencies where no Liberal candidate had stood. This rose by two in the second general election that year, but Labour had still fallen back in strength from 1906.

Thereafter, between 1910 and 1914, Labour candidates failed to hold seats in a series of by-elections so that by 1914 the Party had only 36 MPs.

Key date

Labour loses seats in January general election: 1910

Perhaps even more serious in some ways for the Labour Party was the ending of the Liberal Party's overall majority. Before 1910, the Liberal Government had enjoyed more or less complete freedom of action in terms of developing its policies. The emergence of 'New Liberalism' (see pages 29–31) made many in the Liberal Party sympathetic to those they regarded as natural allies. However, from 1910, the Irish National Party held the balance of power in the House of Commons. Twice the size of the Labour Party in terms of MPs, it could now exercise a more decisive pressure on the Liberal Government than the Labour Party had ever done.

The new emphasis of Liberal–INP relations on House of Lords reform and Irish Home Rule moved the political focus away from the natural concerns of the Labour Party. The extent of the Liberal reforms up to 1911 had in any case reduced the urgency of many of the issues that had united Liberals and Labour in 1906. On the eve of the First World War, despite the fact that the Party was making encouraging progress in local elections and securing influence or even overall control in some local authorities, the future of the Labour Party seemed far from assured.

Key question
Why was there so much industrial unrest during this period?

3 | The Trade Unions and Industrial Unrest 1910–14

The years between 1910 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 saw a huge increase in trade union membership from 2.5 million to 4 million. This was a trend that would continue strongly during the war and into the post-war period. The period from 1910 to 1914 was also marked by a wave of strikes. The increased militancy can be attributed to the following factors:

Key term
Real wages
Define the value of goods or services that wages can actually buy. For example, if wages remain the same while food prices increase, their 'real' value has gone down. On the other hand if food prices fall the 'real' value of wages has risen.

- From around 1900 the value of **real wages** was gradually falling owing to increases in the cost of living.
- From 1910 there was a fall in the levels of unemployment which made many workers more willing to confront the employers.
- Prices rose particularly steeply in 1911–12.
- The middle and upper classes were actually improving their position, leading to increased bitterness among the workers whose living standards had worsened.

Strikes 1910–13

1910

The first major confrontation came in the south Wales coalfield in the autumn of 1910. A dispute arose over payments for miners working difficult seams of coal. Militancy had been on the increase in south Wales for a number of years and the general mood of bitterness soon resulted in a rash of strikes. It was not long before confrontations between strikers and the authorities produced violence.

1911

During rioting in Tonypandy in south Wales in 1911, a man died from injuries he had sustained in a fight with local police officers and many others suffered less serious injuries. The Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, felt that the seriousness of the situation required that army units be drafted in to support the local police. This decision elevated the Tonypandy riots to mythological status in working-class history. The wave of strikes went on for 10 months before ending in defeat for the miners. This, however, was only the start of the unrest.

In June 1911, the Seamen's Union went on strike and the dockers and railwaymen came out on strike in sympathy. Two months later, two strikers were shot dead by troops in Liverpool after a general riot had broken out. In the same week, troops shot dead two men who were part of a crowd attacking a train at Llanelli.

1912

In 1912, the first national pit strike began, lasting from February until April, with the miners demanding a national minimum wage. The government responded to this, with a compromise, by passing the Minimum Wage Act for Mining, which set up local boards in colliery districts to fix minimum wages for miners working on difficult seams. In the same year there were also strikes in the London docks and among transport workers.

1913

In 1913 there were strikes in the metal-working industries of the Midlands and a major strike of transport workers in Dublin.

The sheer numbers of people involved in these industrial disputes was unprecedented. From the late 1890s onwards, more and more unskilled workers had been drawn into trade unionism. By 1910 around 17 per cent of workers were in trade unions, and the unrest encouraged the trend. By 1914 the figure had risen to 25 per cent.

The rise in female membership of unions was the most remarkable feature of the period. In 1904 there were 126,000 women trade union members. By 1913 there were 431,000, making up 10 per cent of all trade unionists.

4 | The Labour Party and the First World War 1914–18

Key question
How did the Labour Party react to the outbreak of the war?

The outbreak of war in 1914 appeared to threaten the future of the Labour Party. However, in many ways, the war became the making of the Party as a credible alternative government in British politics. The initial danger came from the very serious divisions in the Party over how it should respond to the war. Whereas the Conservatives and the Irish National Party pledged themselves to the full support of the Liberal Government in the war effort, the Labour Party faced an internal dispute over policy. There were three main factions.

- A 'patriotic' element in the Party argued that war meant that all previous political and class hostilities should be put aside and the Labour movement as a whole, i.e. including the trade unions, should wholeheartedly support the war effort.
- A 'moderate' group argued for more conditional support with a more critical approach when needed to protect working-class interests.
- A 'radical' Marxist-inspired element demanded that the war be condemned as an imperialist conspiracy by collapsing capitalist nations.

These divisions were further complicated by the moral concerns of individuals in the Party who held 'pacifist' views. From their perspective, war itself was morally wrong and could not be supported. Some individual Liberals also held to this view, for example John Morley resigned from his position because he felt he could not serve in a government at war.

Key term

Militarism
Principle that military power is a desirable end in itself and that its use to achieve objectives is desirable.

From the earliest stages of the war, elements in the Labour Party campaigned vigorously against '**militarism**' – often in the face of public hostility. The most immediate outcome of the war in 1914 for the Labour Party was the resignation of Ramsay MacDonald as leader. MacDonald felt he could not support the war and resigned as a consequence. In September 1914 he helped form a new group, the Union of Democratic Control (UDC), which aimed to maintain the arguments of those who opposed entry into the war and continue the demand for settlement by negotiation and not military victory. MacDonald was replaced as Labour Party leader by Arthur Henderson.

Key question
How did the First World War change the fortunes of the Labour Party?

Coalition government

In early 1915 a scandal was brewing at the highest level as a result of the failure of the Liberal Government to provide sufficient munitions for the war effort. The attitude of Asquith's government at the start of the war had been to insist that the war could be fought on the basis of 'business as usual'. By the spring of 1915 this policy had so restricted the war effort on the Western Front that the Unionists refused to continue supporting the government unless something was done.

Key dates

Arthur Henderson, the Leader of the Labour Party, joins the Coalition Cabinet: 1915

Henderson joins Lloyd George's War Cabinet – a number of Labour MPs become junior ministers: 1916

As a result, Asquith agreed to the formation of a coalition government of national unity. Since the co-operation of the trade unions was essential to the war effort, Henderson, as leader of the Labour Party, was invited to join the Cabinet, nominally to take charge of education, but in fact to be the representative of 'labour' interests. Other Labour leaders were brought into the government at more junior levels. When the Lloyd George coalition was formed in 1916, Henderson continued in the new 'War Cabinet' as one of only five members. Labour had arrived on the governmental scene.

In 1916, Henderson became involved in a dispute with his Cabinet colleagues. Following the Russian Revolution in March 1917 that overthrew the Tsar, the new Russian Government

suggested a new set of war aims based on 'no **annexations** and no **indemnities**'.

Henderson went to Russia in May 1917 on behalf of the Cabinet and he returned convinced that the Russian war aims must be adopted by the Labour Party. He also wanted to send delegates to a socialist conference being organised in Sweden at which there would be representatives from socialist parties on both sides in the war as well as neutrals. Lloyd George at first agreed to this, but then faced with protests from the French, who wanted both territory and compensation from the Germans after the war, he changed his mind.

Henderson refused to back down and resigned from the War Cabinet. He was replaced by George Barnes, another former Labour Party leader. The other Labour ministers in the government all remained in office.

Key terms

Annexations
Territory taken by the winner from the loser.

Indemnities
Compensation paid by the losers to the winners to cover, partly or in full, their war costs. The term 'reparations' is often used to describe this.

Key date

Henderson resigns and is replaced by a former Labour leader, George Barnes: 1917

New Labour Party Constitution is approved: 1918

End of the war 1918

As the war drew to a close the Labour Party began to heal the divisions that had been caused in its own ranks. In 1918, Sidney Webb, one of the original Fabians and now a leading party figure, drafted 'Labour and the New Social Order', a clear party programme with a strongly socialist tone. It was the basis for a new constitution for the Party, the fourth clause of which promised extensive state control of the economy in the interests of 'the producers by hand and by brain' of the nation's wealth.

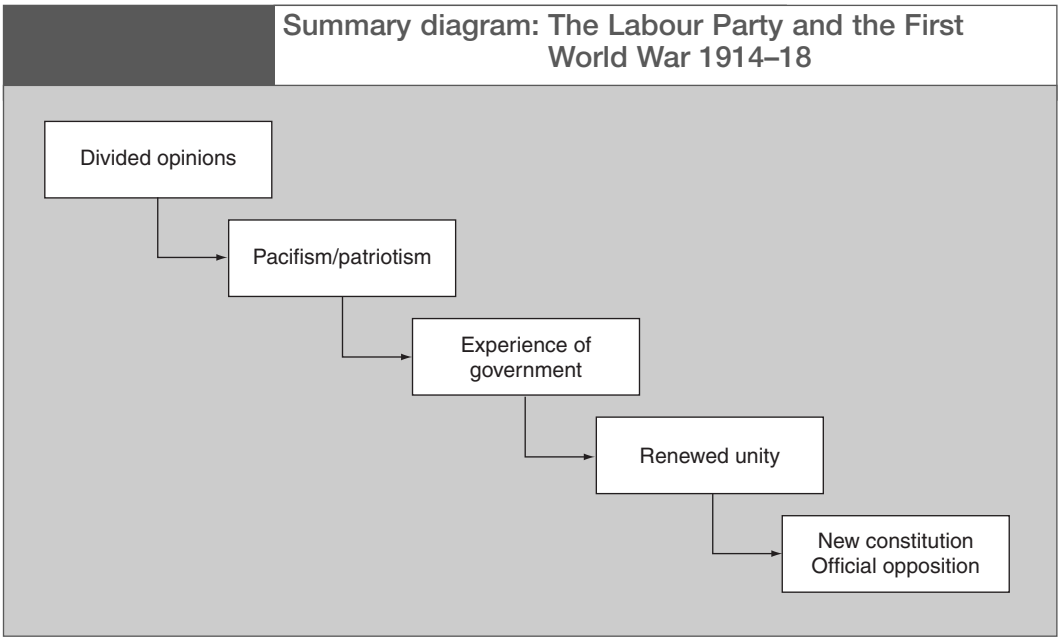
The foreign policy of the Party was provided by bringing in the UDC. This marked the return of MacDonald as the unacknowledged joint leader of the Party with Henderson and also the beginning of the end of Labour's association with the coalition.

Once the war was over, a Labour Party conference was called for 14 November, just three days after the armistice. Lloyd George had already called a general election and he urged the Labour Party to continue as part of the coalition. At the conference the Fabian George Bernard Shaw famously urged that the Party 'Go back to Lloyd George and say – nothing doing'. Most of the Labour ministers did precisely this and resigned. The few that did not, resigned from the Labour Party.

Labour then went on to fight the general election as the only party of undivided opposition to the coalition government. There was a price to pay for this show of independence. Despite a franchise that now included all men and most women over 30, Labour did not achieve a major breakthrough. In all, the Party won 59 seats and all but one of them were trade union sponsored. The 'pacifists' were shown what the electorate thought of them when almost all of them lost their seats.

MacDonald was defeated as was Henderson, who had served at Cabinet level. But the die was now cast. Independence from Lloyd George gave Labour a united platform denied to the Liberals, who were hopelessly divided and demoralised. The new constitution of 1918 meant that the Labour Party had a programme that could

offer the voters in the now virtually democratised political system (where over 20 million people could vote) relevant reforms and the vision of a socialist future.



Key question
What factors restricted the support enjoyed by the Labour Party in 1918?

5 | From War to Government

The general election of 1918 gave the Labour Party 59 seats in the House of Commons and made it marginally the largest opposition group to the coalition government of Lloyd George. Ten Labour members were returned as supporters of the coalition whilst 48 Conservatives also sat on the opposition backbenches. Most significantly the Liberal opponents of the coalition, led by Asquith, numbered only 26. With the Irish Nationalist Party, Sinn Fein (see page 115), refusing to take up its seats, Labour had achieved a breakthrough to the position of official opposition. However, given that this election saw all men and those women aged over 30 years old having the right to vote, in the first genuinely mass electorate of over 20 million voters, Labour's performance was in many ways disappointing.

There were a number of issues:

- Despite apparent unity, the image of the party was still affected by the divisions of the war years and the opposition to the war that had emerged within the party still rankled with some potential working-class voters.
- The personal popularity of Lloyd George as a war leader and radical reformer also diverted support away from Labour towards the coalition.
- The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia had already resulted in the outbreak of a bitter and bloody civil war. Rumours of the

murder of the former Tsar and his entire family added to the fear of communism that was by no means limited to the better-off classes. The Labour Party was easily, if unfairly, linkable to Bolshevism.

Despite this, Labour's fortunes began to improve. Between 1918 and the next general election in November 1922, Labour were successful in a series of by-elections. Their total seats rose steadily to 72. When Lloyd George was forced to resign in late October 1922 (see Chapter 8), his successor Bonar Law called an immediate election and the Labour Party secured significant progress winning 142 seats and, critically, staying ahead of the combined but still divided Liberals under Lloyd George and Asquith, who together totalled 117 seats. Most importantly the election resolved an ongoing problem for Labour – that of the leadership. Since 1918 Ramsay MacDonald, potentially the most effective leader, had been out of the House of Commons. Now he returned as MP for the Welsh constituency of Aberavon and was immediately re-elected leader. Thus, by the end of 1922 Labour's position was much stronger, although few would have expected that by the end of the following year the party would be on the verge of forming a government. It is therefore necessary to analyse the reasons why Labour's fortunes improved so much over the period 1918–22. The principal factors were as follows:

- Disillusionment with the Lloyd George coalition began to set in as it became apparent that reforms were limited or slow to take effect.
- The party took measures to distance itself from extremism. MacDonald personally went to great lengths to present himself as a conventional politician; almost too far for some as he was often to be seen at country houses and big receptions. He and the other leaders dressed very traditionally for any important public occasions. In 1921 the party rejected any association with the Communist International set up by Lenin's government in Russia to promote the spread of global communism.
- The founding of the British Communist Party in 1920 helped establish the Labour Party as a more conventional party. The Labour Party from the first emphasised a distinction between their brand of socialism and communism.

Even so, by 1923 Labour's future as one of the two main parties of the British political system looked far from secured. The events of 1923 however, delivered the decisive shift. In October 1923 Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, who had replaced the dying Bonar Law in May, declared himself in favour of abandoning the economic policy of free trade in favour of a system of economic protection of British markets from foreign imports (see Chapter 8). This announcement led to the calling of a general election in December. The Liberal Party reunited in response to the threat to the traditional Liberal policy of free trade. The Labour Party, following its long-standing position also denounced protection.

The election result guaranteed the emergence of the first Labour government. The Conservative overall majority was wiped out and although they remained the biggest single party with 258 seats, the combined Labour and Liberal anti-protection vote easily outweighed them with 349 seats. Of these the greater share, 191 seats, went to Labour, who as the second largest party were in the best position to create a government pledged to maintain free trade. Although there was a brief delay into the new year, when the new Parliament officially met, the resignation of Baldwin was a formality and on 22 January 1924 Ramsay MacDonald was invited by King George VI to form a government.

Key figures in the government

The party was, of course, totally unprepared for the experience. MacDonald took the view that the party *had* to take office because failure to do so would be tantamount to an admission of incompetence. His objective was to conduct a minority government on as stable a basis as possible in the expectation that eventual defeat would be seen as honourable, and establish the party as 'fit to govern'.

MacDonald made a mess of the task of forming the cabinet. Unsure of the abilities of his colleagues in such an unaccustomed setting he hesitated over appointments, offending and confusing senior figures in the party. He offered the War Office to the pacifist Arthur Henderson, after originally intending not to include him at all and eventually reluctantly made him Home Secretary. The post of Chancellor of the Exchequer he offered to Philip Snowden by means of a note pencilled on a scrap of paper and tossed across the table at a meeting of leaders in his room at the House of Commons. In the end he could think of nobody to trust with the Foreign Office so took the post himself. He included some sympathetic Liberals from the House of Lords. The left-wing of the party he sought to appease by the inclusion of John Wheatley who became Minister of Health.

Legislation

The course of the government's life was unspectacular. As a minority government it was constantly seeking to avoid giving the opposition any grounds to defeat it. A more adventurous policy might tactically have exposed the Liberals for a lack of radicalism but it would also have brought the government down much sooner. As it was, MacDonald was able to stay in office for a period of nine months, demonstrating that Labour could actually govern without the country falling into anarchy. MacDonald trod a delicate line; anxious to offer both patriotism and social reform:

- Five new ships (replacements) were ordered for the navy.
- Legislation was introduced to increase unemployment benefits and eliminate the gap in payments that occurred when an unemployed person ran out of ensured benefits and went onto National Assistance benefits.

- The limit on private income reducing old-age pensions was raised.
- Some of the education cuts brought in by previous governments were removed.
- Government subsidies were announced for schemes involving road-building, electrification and local government projects.
- A new Housing Act increased the government subsidy for building rented accommodation and tried to increase employment and the training of apprentices in the building trades.

6 | The Fall of the First Labour Government

A series of events undermined the government by October 1924:

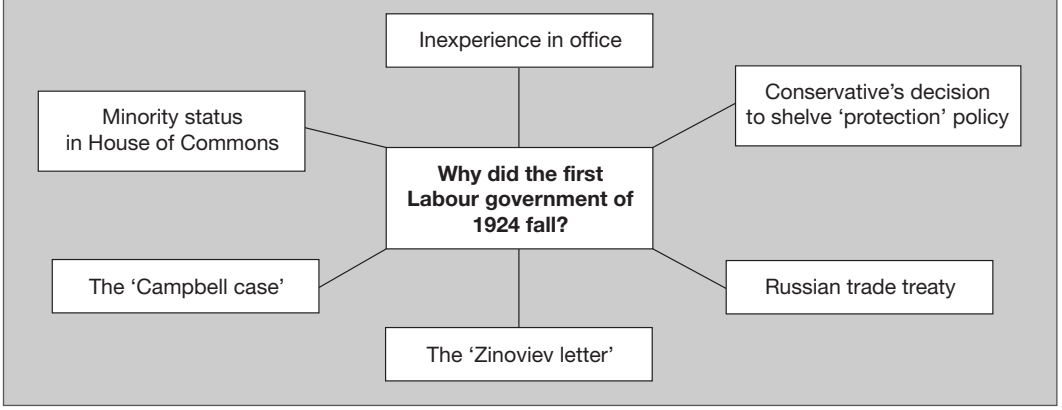
- MacDonald was involved in an honours scandal. It emerged that he had received shares in a biscuit company along with a Daimler car when he became prime minister. The gifts had come from a boyhood friend Alexander Grant who had risen to become a director of the company. Grant was then given a knighthood. By the standards of the times it was hardly corruption. Grant had been a well-known figure for some time and his knighthood had been in prospect well before MacDonald took over as prime minister. Even so it was embarrassing.
- A trade treaty with Russia arranged in the summer of 1924 attracted criticism from both Conservatives and Liberals and reawakened old fears about Labour Bolshevik sympathies.
- On 24 July 1924 the editor of the *Workers' Weekly*, J.R. Campbell, published an article urging service men not to open fire on workers in industrial disputes or in war. He was then arrested and prosecuted under the Incitement to Mutiny Act, 1797. Protests followed from some Labour MPs and on 13 August after Parliament had gone into recess, the prosecution was withdrawn. This led in turn to protests from Conservatives and Liberals.

The 'Campbell case' was the decisive factor in bringing the government down. The controversy continued and degenerated when Parliament resumed in September. Exchanges between the government and its critics became increasingly hostile and MacDonald was exposed to some rude comments about his free motor-car. Both the Conservatives and Liberals put down motions of 'censure' criticising the government. On 6 October the government announced that it would treat both motions as votes of confidence, meaning that if defeated the government would resign. On 8 October the debate took place and the government was defeated by 364 votes to 198.

In the election that followed the 'Red scare' issue generated by the Russian trade treaty and more particularly by the 'Campbell case' played a significant part. The election was held on 29 October 1924. The campaign was marked by increasingly lurid discussions about the threat of communism both inside the

country and internationally. Four days before the election *The Times* ran a story alleging a 'Soviet plot' and citing a letter signed by the Bolshevik leader Zinoviev, the president of the Communist International, apparently urging preparations for a class war to be launched in Britain. The degree of influence that the 'Zinoviev letter' had on voters has been debated ever since, but the fact remains that the election resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Conservatives. They won 415 seats; Labour fell back to 152 but actually increased its share of the vote; the Liberals however were crushed, obtaining only 42 seats and seeing Asquith defeated in the process. Most historians have concluded that even without the 'Zinoviev letter' the Conservatives would have won though possibly without such an overwhelming majority. For Labour the result was a setback but no more than that. In fact, it further established them as the only logical alternative government to the Conservatives.

Summary diagram: The fall of the first Labour government 1924



Study Guide: AS Questions

In the style of AQA

(a) Explain why the Labour Representation Committee made an electoral pact with the Liberals in 1903. (12 marks)

(b) 'By 1914, the Labour Party was established as a major political force.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. (24 marks)

Exam tips

The cross-references are intended to take you straight to the material that will help you to answer the questions.

(a) There is clearly more to this answer than the obvious 'because the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) wanted to get Labour representatives elected into Parliament'! You need to consider the ambitions of the LRC and its concern to place political realities before ideology as well as the mechanics of the agreement and what it might mean in practice. You should also consider the pact from the Liberals point of view and what they hoped to gain from it, referring back to material in Chapter 2. Try to show how the various factors link and offer an overall conclusion.

(b) The key here is to reach a clear judgement. You need to balance your assessment between the obvious lack of progress in Parliament and the wider picture of the build-up of the party's infrastructure in the country at grass-roots level.

- By 1914 Labour had been losing by-elections over the past three years and had only 36 MPs, which compares unfavourably with the 52 who came together in 1906 (page 92).
- The party had also suffered from the effect of the Osborne Judgement, which had cut off its funding from the unions since 1909 (page 92).
- However, this was subsequently reversed by the Liberals in the Trade Union Act of 1913, and the independence of Labour MPs had been helped by the introduction of salaries for MPs in 1911.
- Labour's performance in local elections was also encouraging. Overall, it is most likely that Labour in 1914 represented a party with the potential to be a major force in the future, rather than an actual major force at that time.

Your answer should lead to a well-supported conclusion showing why you agree or disagree with the given view.

In the style of OCR A

Study the five sources on the impact of the First World War on the Labour Party, and then answer **both** sub-questions. It is recommended that you spend two-thirds of your time in answering part **(b)**.

(a) Study Sources C and D.
Compare these sources as evidence for the attitudes toward government responsibility for welfare. (30 marks)

(b) Study all the sources.
Use your own knowledge to assess how far the sources support the interpretation that in the period from 1900 to 1914 there was growing support for the need for state intervention in the problem of poverty and national efficiency. (70 marks)

Source A

From: Beatrice Webb's diary, 1914. A socialist and leading member of the Fabian Society points out some of the limitations of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The recent Labour Party conference was a personal triumph for Ramsay MacDonald. As leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, his clever arguments easily persuaded all those politically inexperienced trade unionists at the conference. Our left-wing propaganda has suggested that having working-class Labour Members of Parliament is useful. But, generally, the closer a Labour member sticks to the Liberal Party, the better he feels. He still believes in the right of the middle and professional classes to do the work of government. He does not believe that his fellow workers are capable of government; and generally he is right.

Source B

From: Beatrice Webb's diary, January 1916. Webb describes Labour's divisions over the Military Service Bill introduced to the House of Commons in January 1916.

The year opens badly for Labour. The Munitions Act, the Defence of the Realm Act and the suppression of a free press have been followed by the cabinet's decision in favour of compulsory military service. The next step will be the conscription of the whole of industry; the 'servile state' will soon be established. Nearly all Labour MPs were converted to some measure of conscription. Henderson, the Labour leader, said that the alternative was a general election, and that every Labour MP who was against conscription would lose their seat in such an election.

Source C

From: Beatrice Webb's diary, December 1916. Webb takes a fairly critical view of the Labour Party's decision to accept office in the new coalition government led by David Lloyd George.

The meeting decided by 18 votes to 12 in favour of accepting office. It is very difficult to know what these Labour leaders were thinking. A thorough beating of the Germans may have passed through their minds. But their main mistake was the illusion that the mere presence of Labour men in the government is a sign of democratic progress. Each thinks he will get the policies he wants. They do not realise that, when they serve with experienced officials, they are no longer independent.

Source D

From: Sidney Webb's address to his constituents, reprinted in The New Statesman*, November 1918. The husband of Beatrice Webb, and one of those chiefly responsible for drawing up Labour's policies, explains why the Labour Party should fight alone in the coming 1918 general election.*

There were good reasons for Labour joining a coalition ministry: as long as the war was the dominant issue, on which all were agreed as to policy. But now it is proposed to have a peace-time coalition. It is clear that the other parties are not prepared to adopt our policies of reconstruction, as worked out by Labour during the last two years. Therefore, in the general election, the policies of each party should be submitted separately to the electorate for its decision. Labour is prepared to do this. Besides, in a time of industrial unrest, the best safeguard of democracy would be a strong and independent Labour Party in Parliament.

Source E

From: R. McKibbin, The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910–24*, published in 1973. A modern historian comments on the fortunes of the Labour and Liberal parties in the early years of the twentieth century.*

The rise of the Labour Party and the slow wearing down of the Liberal Party both came from a developing sense of common aims and interests by the working class. This process was well under way by 1914 and would have continued, with or without the war. The war did have a significant effect in bringing about the 1918 Representation of the People Act, which gave Britain an electorate in which the working class was now predominant. Much of this new electorate voted Labour in 1918; but, had it been given the vote earlier, it would probably have done the same in 1914.

Exam tips

(a) Sources C and D both come from highly placed figures in the Labour Party and as such offer a valuable insight into the attitudes towards participation in government. Both sources draw out the imperative issue of the war: even the criticism of Beatrice Webb accepts that this was an important factor, and she also draws attention to the idea that merely by being members of the government the cause of democracy was being served (although she concludes that this was an illusion). Source D is quite compatible in some ways with Source C in that it is looking to what is best for democracy and concluding that in the changed circumstances of 1918 collaboration is no longer acceptable.

(b) This requires a balanced judgement based on consideration of the impact of the war on the Labour Party. To do this properly you will need to refer to the pre-war period in some detail. Sources A and E refer to the period before 1914. As always with this type of question, you need to group the sources according to what they say and construct a thematic answer. Use the sources as fully as possible and make sure that you refer to all of them. Look for opportunities to use your own knowledge to elaborate on the detail in the sources as well as using it to bring out points that the sources do not cover. Some kind of judgement on the state of the party in 1914 is vital, as well as balanced coverage of both the negative and positive impacts of the war, e.g. divisions of opinion and experience of administration.

In the style of OCR B

Answer **both** parts of your chosen question.

(a) How is the rise of a Labour movement best explained?
[Explaining ideas, intentions and circumstances.] (25 marks)

(b) Why was the LRC formed?
[Explaining motives, intentions and circumstances.] (25 marks)

Exam tips

Revise the General Introduction at the start of the Study Guide to Chapter 2 (page 39).

(a) Initial focus could be empathetic or causal or intentional, and then shift to each of the other two. Given the wording of the question, you need to build into your circles of explanation an evaluation of the relative importance of the various reasons you consider so you answer directly 'best explained'.

Your essay will mix examination of the influence of ideas and events. Do not expect them to be separate. A political movement is founded on and driven by ideology but they, in turn will be shaped by circumstance. Your first circle might consider the roots of the Labour movement in Chartism, in the socialist revival and the emerging idea that the working classes needed their own political party. Within that, a sub-circle could consider the relative influence of ideas (Marx) and circumstance (the 1867 Reform Act and the slumps of the 1870s). Keep this part under control: it is always easy to get carried away on 'background' and you must push on to look at the 1880s and 1890s as well. Your next circles could take those possibilities forward by examining them in a different context: why the SDF, the Fabians and the Socialist League all emerged in the 1880s, and the ILP was formed in 1893. In that, you will again be dealing with the relationship between economic hardship and more aggressive behaviour by employers (on the one hand) and rising support for socialism and class-based politics (on the other). Here, a new influence will also be introduced: the emergence of stronger and more politically active trades unions.

(b) Begin with an intentional explanation, and then switch to the causal mode. Equally, structuring your essay the other way around would work well. This is not the same question as question **(a)** because while that ranged back to the 1840s and had a strong focus on ideas, question **(b)** is about a specific event in 1900 and must focus on the role of one individual (Kier Hardie) and a group of organisations (the trades unions).

You might start by posing a question: what was wrong with the ILP? Your answer will take you to the heart of working-class politics in 1900 and will provide your core circles of explanation. Recognise that the trades unions were the key driver, and consider why that was by examining the harsh employment and economic climate of the 1890s. Your next circle needs to build

on that by considering the role played by Hardie both at the 1900 special conference and behind the scenes. Bringing in Hardie will allow you to examine not just why something happened to promote the election of working men as MPs, but the equally important question why what emerged was the LRC and not a militant revolutionary movement (i.e. the triumph of ILP over SDF thinking). Hardie was midwife to the LRC's birth and his practical and pragmatic view is to be seen all over the new Committee: working with the unions and the Liberals to promote the cause, and toning down talk of socialism (very ironic given the powerful influence of socialism in its conception).

A final note: do not divert yourself into the Taff Vale case. That was in 1901 when the LRC was already up and running.

6 Ireland 1890–1922

POINTS TO CONSIDER

The relationship between Ireland and the British mainland has been a key theme in the history of the British Isles. Domination by mainland Britain has had a massive impact on the course of Irish history. Equally, however, events in and issues relating to Ireland have frequently had a major impact on British politics. In this chapter, Irish affairs will be examined in two stages:

- The origins and nature of the Irish Question
- An analysis of the events between 1895 and 1918 considering:
  - The revival of political nationalism
  - The impact of the constitutional crisis 1909–11
  - The Third Home Rule Bill 1912
  - The First World War 1914–18

Key dates

1800	Act of Union
1845–51	The potato famine hits Ireland
1869	Irish Anglican Church disestablished
1870	Land Act gives Irish tenants limited rights
1882	Second Irish Land Act extends tenant rights
1886	Gladstone introduces the Home Rule Bill for Ireland, which fails to become law
1892–3	Gladstone's second attempt at Home Rule for Ireland also fails
1910	Irish National Party holds balance of power in the House of Commons
1911	Parliament Act
1912	Third Home Rule Bill introduced
1912–13	The Ulster Crisis – Ireland on brink of civil war over issue of Home Rule
1914	Third Home Rule Bill passed but suspended for the duration of the war
1916	Easter Rising – Irish independence proclaimed but rebels defeated and leaders executed
1918	Sinn Fein Nationalist Party wins majority of Irish seats and declares Ireland independent from Great Britain
1912–21	War of Irish independence
1921	Partition of Ireland

Key question
What was the Easter Rising?

1 | The Origins and Nature of the Irish Question

In 1890 the relationship between Ireland and Great Britain was probably more stable than it had been at any time during the nineteenth century. The immediate history of the Irish Question over the course of the century can be summarised as follows:

- In 1800 the Act of Union constitutionally united Ireland with the rest of Great Britain. This created a 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland'.
- Under the Act of Union, Ireland's separate parliament was abolished and Irish MPs were elected directly to the House of Commons at Westminster. A limited number of Irish Peers were also admitted to the House of Lords.
- Although Ireland was a predominantly Roman Catholic country, the Anglican church was established as the official state Church in Ireland. This was a source of constant resentment until, in 1869, during Gladstone's first government, the Anglican Church was 'disestablished', putting it on the same status as other Churches in Ireland.
- In the period 1845–51 Ireland had suffered from the potato blight that destroyed potato crops all over Europe. However, in Ireland the poverty stricken peasantry depended very heavily and sometimes almost entirely on potatoes as their main source of food. As a result around one million people in Ireland died of starvation and related diseases, while around two million emigrated. Great Britain failed to take any effective action to combat this 'potato famine' and the anger it produced in Ireland was passed down the generations.
- The central social problem in Ireland was the depressed economic condition of the rural peasant farmers. They farmed land that was often owned by English landlords, many of whom lived permanently in England. Their impoverished Catholic tenants mostly had no security in their tenancy agreements and could be vulnerable to eviction. Farming methods were primitive and unproductive compared to England. Gladstone went a long way towards solving the land problem with two acts in 1870 and 1882 which, taken together, had the effect of giving tenants proper tenancy rights, protection from unfair rents and the right to sell on their tenancy as a business.
- The problem still remained of the constitutional relationship between Great Britain and Ireland. In the second half of the nineteenth century a **republican** group known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood emerged demanding independence. This group was prepared to use violence to advance its campaign but it commanded little support in Ireland. More moderate Irish nationalists, who had formed an Irish National Party to put Ireland's case at Westminster, demanded 'Home Rule' for Ireland. This would have meant that Ireland could assume control over its own internal affairs but not for matters such as foreign affairs or trade. It was this demand that

Key term
Republican
One who rejects the principle of monarchy in favour of a head of state elected by or appointed from the people of the country.

Gladstone agreed to in 1886 and 1892 with his two Home Rule bills. Both bills, however, were defeated in Parliament.

- In order to 'kill Home Rule with kindness' the Conservative Government of Lord Salisbury (1886–92) followed a policy of allowing loans to tenant farmers who wished to buy out their landlords. The hope was that over a period of time the hated 'absentee' landlords would disappear and a new class of conservative-minded Catholic farmers would emerge.
- The decision to offer Ireland Home Rule in 1886 exposed the so-called 'Ulster Problem'. The northern counties of Ireland, collectively known as Ulster, were populated by a predominant majority of Protestants. In particular, in the second half of the nineteenth century the city of Belfast rose to rival Dublin in size and outweigh it in economic importance because of its growing shipbuilding industry. Belfast was a majority Protestant city and the Home Rule issue in 1886 led to riots as Protestants of all classes took to the streets to reject the idea of being ruled by an all-Ireland Home Rule Parliament in which Roman Catholics would be the majority. From this point on the position of Ulster was a key factor in the overall Irish Question.
- Between 1880 and 1891 Irish politics was dominated by Charles Stewart Parnell who emerged as a great nationalist leader, despite his being an Anglican landowner. Parnell raised the Irish National Party to the point where it held the balance of power in the House of Commons and seriously influenced the two major parties. However, Parnell was a controversial figure and his involvement with a married woman ending in a scandalous divorce case split the party into two groups and left it in a bitter state of recrimination. In 1891, before the dispute could be resolved, Parnell died leaving his supporters and opponents still at odds with each other. In 1895 therefore many Irishmen had lost interest in politics. The land question seemed to have been largely resolved. The Irish National Party seemed to be a waste of time as it appeared more interested in its internal division than in representing Ireland at Westminster.

The British Perspective

Key question
Why was Great Britain so determined to resist Irish independence?

From the point of view of the mainstream British politicians at the end of the nineteenth century, Ireland could never be allowed to be politically independent from Great Britain for the following reasons:

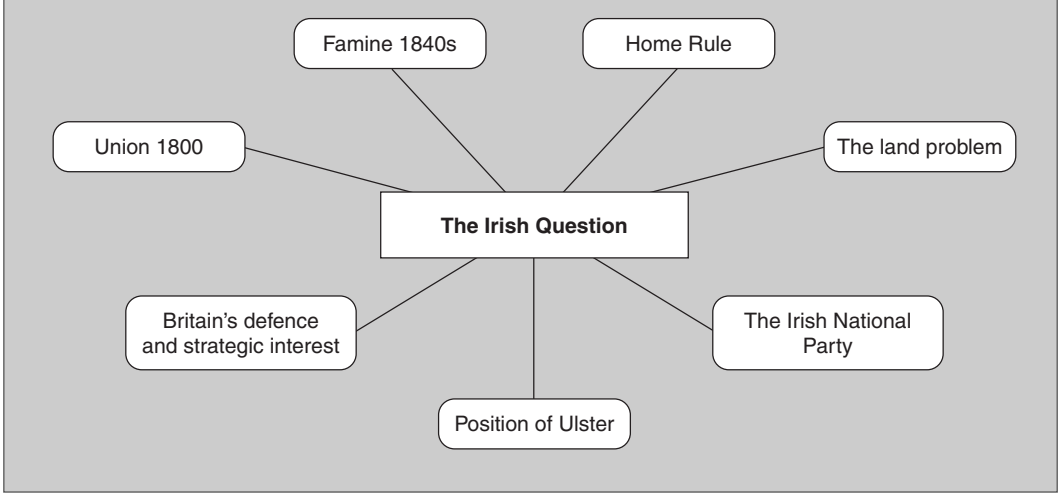
- Too many influential people in Great Britain owned land or held business interests in Ireland. Most of these people were opposed even to allowing Home Rule for Ireland, let alone accepting its complete separation. Indeed, even supporters of Home Rule, such as Gladstone, argued in its favour on the basis that it would satisfy moderate Irish opinion and end any widespread demand for independence.
- Economically, Ireland was seen as integral to the economy of the British Isles as a whole and thus could not be allowed to go

Figure 6.1: Map showing Ireland in relation to the British mainland and continental Europe.

its own way without disruption to the British economy. Again, Home Rule would not have allowed economic independence.
- In imperial terms the independence of Ireland would have had (it was argued) disastrous effects on the unity of the Empire as a whole. How could the Empire be expected to remain intact if the United Kingdom itself could not do so?
- Most important of all was the strategic issue. Ireland lay on the other side of the British mainland from continental Europe (see Figure 6.1, page 111). Great Britain could not afford to allow Irish independence as this might have compromised security in the event of a war with a major continental power. Suppose Ireland decided to side with the continental power or was invaded and overrun? In those circumstances Britain would face the disruption of sea access to British ports from the Atlantic and the possibility of invasion from two sides. From a strategic point of view Ireland's independence was out of the question.

When the second Home Rule Bill was defeated by an overwhelming majority in the House of Lords in 1893, Gladstone was keen to fight another general election on the issue. He hoped to get a firm overall liberal majority that could force the Lords to accept Home Rule. His colleagues in the Cabinet, however, were not prepared to support this course of action. They believed, almost certainly correctly, that there was no real support for the policy in the country at large. Gladstone therefore resigned and was replaced by Lord Rosebery, who then shelved Home Rule for an unspecified period.

Summary diagram: The origins and nature of the Irish Question



Key question
How did Irish nationalism manifest itself in the period before 1914?

2 | 1895–1909: The Revival of Political Nationalism

In these circumstances, it might be considered surprising that Ireland entered a relatively peaceful period between 1893 and the introduction of the third Home Rule Bill in 1912. Political apathy ruled the day. Many Irishmen had not really expected Home Rule to pass anyway and the improvement in the general condition of Ireland meant that many Irishmen felt that Home Rule was not that vital and could be left until political conditions meant there was better chance of success. After all, the Liberals were still committed to the policy in principle. However, this did not mean that Irish nationalism was now a thing of the past.

Key date
Third Home Rule Bill introduced: 1912

A cultural revival

National pride and aspirations found their expression, increasingly, in a great cultural revival that emphasised the importance of restoring the status of the Irish language, which had long been in decline. Irish sports began to flourish; Irish literature, dance and music recruited new enthusiasts. This movement was marked by the formation of organisations such as the Gaelic League, founded in 1893, and by the expansion of earlier groups such as the Gaelic Athletic Association (1884). Even so, despite the unthreatening tone of the cultural revival, nationalism of this kind could not be wholly divorced from a political context.

Key terms
West Britonism
The idea that Ireland had no real separate identity but was merely a geographical area of Britain.

Landlordism
System of land use where real power resides with those who own the land at the expense of those who actually work on it.

The fundamental message of the revival was anti-British. It condemned what was often called '**West Britonism**' and encouraged a separate Irish consciousness. It required only a change in the political climate to harness this sense of a separate Irish identity to a new and specifically Irish political agenda.

Key question
How did the British Government try to resolve the Irish Question between 1895 and 1909?

The government's position 1895–1909

The alliance of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists, which formed the Unionist Government of 1895–1905, hoped to bury the issue of Home Rule once and for all. The Land Act of 1903, usually known as 'Wyndham's Act' after George Wyndham, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, substantially completed the transfer of land from landlords to tenants. This was the cornerstone of the Unionist strategy by which Ireland was to be pacified.

The Irish National Party was in two minds about this process. On the one hand, they could hardly condemn the end of the hated '**landlordism**'; on the other, they recognised that with its passing they had lost one of their most potent political weapons. They consoled themselves with the thought that the Liberal Party remained pledged to the introduction of Home Rule and waited on events.

In 1906 this policy of patience appeared to have paid off when the Liberals won a great victory in the general election. The Liberals now had so great a parliamentary majority that they could, if necessary, contemplate a constitutional clash with the House of Lords if the peers proved obstructive to measures

passed with massive support in the Commons. This was the situation Gladstone had dreamed of, but could never achieve. Unfortunately for the Irish Party, his successors had inherited his pledge but not his commitment. From the outset the Liberal Government was determined not to allow Irish affairs to dominate their administration.

Although the policy of Home Rule was not abandoned, it was no longer to be the primary objective as Gladstone had desired. The Liberals between 1906 and 1909 preferred to embark upon a general policy of social reform, before considering any fundamental constitutional change. The Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman, and his successor, Asquith, both feared that Home Rule would provoke a constitutional crisis that might result in the loss of their majority at a general election. They were therefore determined to secure social reform first. This was an exact reversal of Gladstone's priorities.

Nor was there much that the Irish Party could do to force the issue. The Government was not dependent on Irish support and was aware that Home Rule had never aroused much support or even interest among the English electorate, to whom social and economic issues were of far more importance.

The emergence of the 'New Nationalists'

Key question
Why had Irish nationalism become stronger by 1906?

In the meantime, in Ireland itself, new nationalist forces were taking shape that would ultimately control Irish destinies and destroy the Irish National Party.

James Connolly

A **labour movement** was growing, under the control of James Connolly, an ardent socialist and trade union organiser.

Connolly was motivated by the Marxist belief that socialism could be achieved only when a country was sufficiently industrialised for the industrial workers (or proletariat) to be strong enough to overthrow 'capitalist oppression'. He believed that Ireland had remained largely agricultural because it was forced to serve the wider needs of the British economy. To Connolly, Irish independence was essential if Ireland was ever to reach the stage at which a socialist state could be established.

In aiming for a **Socialist Workers' Republic**, and in linking that idea with trade unionism, Connolly made a major breakthrough in the cause of Irish nationalism. He won over the urban working classes in Dublin to republicanism and therefore, by definition, to **separatism**. This provided a new and important political driving force for independence from Britain.

Key terms

Labour movement
Principle of organising the working classes so that they can achieve better conditions.

Socialist Workers' Republic
Political system where government is based on the principle of a socialist state controlled by the working classes.

Separatism
Principle of separating Ireland from Great Britain.

Sinn Fein

Connolly's movement, with its newspaper, the *Workers' Republic*, and its group of activists – the Citizen Army – was opposed by another new nationalist force, Sinn Fein (meaning 'ourselves alone'), founded by Arthur Griffith in 1905. This movement, through its paper *The United Irishmen*, rejected Connolly's ideas of

socialism and violent revolution as well as the Irish National Party's constitutional approach.

Instead, Griffith wanted a system of peaceful resistance in which a voluntary parliament would be formed to govern Ireland in defiance of the British Government. In effect this meant simply carrying on as if Ireland was already independent and ignoring British institutions, such as the courts and civil administration, as though they did not exist.

The essence of Griffith's policy was a kind of federal solution, in which Ireland and Great Britain would have been made more equal in status. A similar system had been used by Austria and Hungary in the 1860s and had successfully improved their relations within the Austrian Empire. For this reason Griffith's plan was sometimes referred to by contemporaries as 'The Austrian Solution'.

Griffith did not want a republic and he did not want the overthrow of capitalism. He aimed to create conditions in which capitalism could flourish more to the benefit of the Irish people.

Key term

Fenian
Late-nineteenth-century group of Irish Nationalists whose aim was Irish independence. They organised a rising in 1827 and carried out bombings in British cities. They recruited heavily in the USA from Irish immigrants.

Underground groups

Apart from these two open organisations, there remained the underground groups dedicated to the **Fenian** tradition, such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). Though republican, the IRB had no clearly defined political philosophy: it was not Marxist, and it therefore had little natural sympathy with Connolly's movement. Its commitment to violence repelled Griffith.

Thus there were serious areas of division between the various strands of Irish nationalism and, in these circumstances, the Irish National Party faced little in the way of a serious challenge to its continued domination of Irish politics.

Key question
How did events in British politics affect the cause of Irish Nationalism?

3 | The Impact of the Constitutional Crisis 1909–11

Key dates

Irish National Party holds balance of power in the House of Commons as result of the general election: 1910

Parliament Act removes the power of the House of Lords to permanently stand in the way of Home Rule: 1911

In 1909 the British political scene began to change dramatically. The crisis over the 1909 Budget (see pages 66–8) resulted in some momentous developments for Ireland. The general election at the beginning of 1910 saw the Liberals lose their overall majority in the House of Commons. From now on they were to be a minority government, with the Irish Nationalist MPs holding the balance of power. This was followed by a constitutional crisis that ended with the passing of the Parliament Act of 1911 (see pages 70–2), which deprived the House of Lords of its indefinite veto over legislation.

These changes put Irish Home Rule right back at the top of the political agenda again. During the budget crisis, John Redmond, the Irish National Party leader, had opposed a proposal to increase whiskey duties on the grounds that it would adversely affect Irish distilleries. In the crisis over the Parliament Act he based his support for the government on the assurance that Irish Home Rule would be a priority once the curbing of the powers of the House of Lords had been achieved. In his

negotiations with the Liberals he had made it clear that the Irish would act to disrupt government policy if Home Rule remained on the shelf.

The Liberals' position

Redmond's threat of disruption was in many ways a bluff since there was no alternative government from which he could expect to obtain Home Rule. It was however a bluff that was not called. The Liberal commitment to Home Rule, though not as passionate as Gladstone's had been, was nevertheless genuine. This was not to say, however, that the Irish Party could simply present its demands and expect them to be met in full. Asquith, the Prime Minister, intended to introduce a limited Home Rule Bill that could not be credibly represented by Unionists as paving the way for eventual independence. This was unrealistic as a strategy because the Unionists were bound to argue, and with some justification, that any measure of 'Home Rule' was bound to stimulate further nationalist demands.

Other leading Liberals, like Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, believed that a separate deal for the largely Protestant and pro-British Ulster counties would have to be devised in the end. Asquith knew they would face fanatical opposition within Ulster itself, along with strong resistance from the Unionist Party in Britain.

The Parliament Act, which was the key to overcoming opposition in the House of Lords, was in reality something of a mixed blessing. It ensured that a Home Rule Bill could be passed, but since the peers could reject the Bill twice before being constitutionally compelled to accept it on the third occasion, it also meant that there would be a minimum period of two years before enactment, during which opponents could take up extreme positions.

4 | The Third Home Rule Bill 1912

Key question
Why was the Third Home Rule Bill a contentious issue?

The Third Home Rule Bill was introduced into the House of Commons in April 1912. The terms were:

- An Irish Parliament with an elected House of Commons and a nominated upper chamber called the Senate with limited powers, especially restricted in financial affairs.
- Forty-two Irish MPs still to sit at Westminster.
- Ulster was to be included in the new Home Rule Parliament.

It was a moderate proposal leaving considerable control of Irish affairs with the Westminster Parliament. It constituted a limited devolution of self-government.

- To Redmond it was barely acceptable and could only be sold to the more extreme INP members as a starting-point for future progress.
- To the Unionists it was entirely unacceptable for the same reason and because of the inclusion of Ulster.

Bonar Law, the Unionist leader, was provoked into an extreme stance when, in July 1912, at a huge Unionist rally at Blenheim Palace, he observed that he could 'imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster can go, in which I should not be prepared to support them'. Asquith responded by calling Bonar Law's speech 'reckless' and 'a complete grammar of anarchy'.

In this bitter atmosphere the Bill passed the Commons for the first time, eventually completing its stormy passage in January 1913. There was great disorder in the House during the debates and verbal abuse was common. The verdict of the Commons was immediately reversed in the Lords. The whole process then had to be repeated, with totally predictable results.

By August 1913 the Bill had passed once more through the Commons, only to receive its routine rejection by the peers. A proposal for a constitutional conference in September 1913 foundered on the uncompromising positions taken by the opposing forces. The most that the Ulster leader, Sir Edward Carson, would accept was Home Rule excluding the whole of the nine counties of Ulster Province. These included the counties of Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan – all of which had Roman Catholic majority populations. These were impossible terms for Redmond and the most that Asquith would concede was a limited degree of independence for Ulster, within the Home Rule provisions. The scene was set for a new constitutional crisis.

Key question
In what ways did the Ulster Crisis affect the Home Rule controversy?

The Unionist resistance

Key date
The Ulster Crisis – Ireland on brink of civil war over issue of Home Rule: 1912–13

While attention had been focused on the fate of the Home Rule Bill at Westminster, events had been moving in Ireland itself. Ulster opinion had been hardening into die-hard resistance well before the introduction of the Bill and, in Sir Edward Carson, it had found an able and articulate leader.

In September 1912, Carson drew up a 'Solemn League and Covenant' whose signatories pledged themselves to resist a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland should one ever be set up. Over 470,000 people signed this covenant – some of the more passionate using their own blood as ink.

In January 1913 the Ulster Volunteer Force was set up and soon numbered 100,000 men. This provoked the setting up of a nationalist counterpart organisation, the Irish National Volunteers, a body pledged to support Redmond, but which was quickly infiltrated by the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The creation of two groups with totally opposed objectives meant that the long-feared risk of civil war began to emerge as a real possibility.

In December 1913, Asquith's government resorted to a ban, by Royal Proclamation, on the importation of arms and ammunition into Ireland. Neither of the two paramilitary forces was as yet properly armed, and the precaution seemed wise. At the same time Asquith was also preparing to extract more concessions from the Irish National Party, in the hope that the opposition in Parliament to Home Rule could at least be reduced. This could only be done by putting pressure on Redmond.

He was persuaded, with great difficulty, to accept the exclusion of Ulster from Home Rule for a temporary period – initially set at three years, but almost immediately doubled to six. The concession compromised the whole concept of Ireland as a single unit and can be seen as the first clear move towards the idea of **partition**, but in reality it was a risk Redmond felt he could take, because it seemed unlikely that Carson would ever accept any temporary exclusion. Carson duly obliged by rejecting the proposal as soon as Asquith put it forward.

Key term

Partition
The separation of a single area into two or more distinct areas under separate authority.

The Curragh Mutiny

In March 1914 the so-called 'Curragh Mutiny' rocked the government. The government had long been concerned that, in the event of a confrontation with the Ulster Unionists, the enforcement of Home Rule would depend on the Army.

The Army units in Ireland were largely controlled by officers of an Anglo-Irish Protestant background who were overwhelmingly Unionist in their sentiments. In an attempt to lessen the risk of widespread resignations from the army in protest against Home Rule, the Secretary of State for War, Jack Seely, approved instructions to General Sir Arthur Paget, the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, that officers whose homes were actually in Ulster could be allowed a temporary leave from duty. There were rumours that the government was about to order the arrest of the Ulster leaders (they had been considering this for some time), and Paget, in briefing his officers, was deliberately pessimistic, suggesting that Ulster would be 'in a blaze by Saturday'.

As a result, 58 officers, including a Brigadier-General, resigned. Action against the defectors was impossible because sympathy for them was widespread throughout the army. The government was forced to conciliate the rebels and Seely even went so far as to suggest that force would not be used against the opponents of Home Rule.

Although Seely was obliged to resign, the government appeared weak and indecisive. The Ulster Volunteers were encouraged to take action to arm themselves. In April, a series of landings of armaments took place along the Ulster coast. There was no interference from the authorities and the Ulster Volunteers were suddenly transformed into a well-armed and formidable army.

It was only a matter of time before the Irish National Volunteers responded. In June, guns for the Nationalists were landed near Dublin, but this time the authorities intervened – leading to three people dead and nearly 40 injured. Although it was by no means as successful an effort as the Ulster landings, it still left considerable quantities of arms in the hands of the nationalist force.

Attempts at compromise

Key question
How did the Liberal Government attempt to resolve the crisis?

Meanwhile, the Home Rule Bill was heading for its final passage. Asquith, Bonar Law and Carson had agreed by June that an additional Amending Bill would be introduced and include some

form of compromise. This in itself was of little use, however, since there was no agreement as to what these amendments should be. Furthermore, any amendments would either have to be accepted by or imposed on Redmond and the Irish National Party.

In late June, the government produced its first attempt at an amending bill. The main proposal was for the exclusion of the Ulster counties from the Home Rule Bill for a period of six years, with each county voting separately for its future. This idea had already been rejected by Carson and the House of Lords amended the proposal to provide for the automatic exclusion of all nine Ulster counties on a permanent basis. This solution the government could not accept.

Encouraged by King George V, the politicians convened a constitutional conference at Buckingham Palace on 21 July 1914:

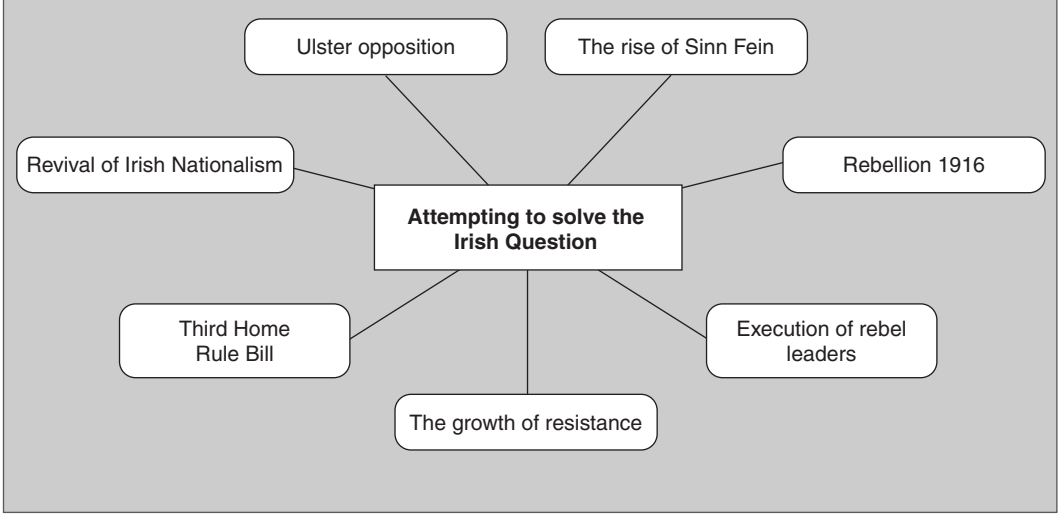
- Asquith and Lloyd George represented the government
- Redmond and John Dillon the INP
- Bonar Law and Lord Lansdowne the Unionist Party
- Carson and James Craig the Ulster Unionists.

The conference was intended to reach decisions in two stages:

- First to debate the area of Ulster to be excluded.
- Second to debate the terms of exclusion, whether they were to be temporary or permanent, and, if the former, then for how long.

In the event the discussions broke down at the first stage and so the second stage was never even considered. After three days of deadlock, the conference was abandoned. Barely a week later, the European crisis came to a head and Britain was at war with Germany.

Summary diagram: Attempts to solve the Irish Question



5 | The Impact of First World War 1914–18

Key question
In what ways did the outbreak of war in 1914 present both opportunities and dangers for the relationship between Great Britain and Ireland?

The crisis of war overtook the Irish Question at a crucial point. All sides in the constitutional conference realised that some kind of compromise was inevitable. Carson, in particular, was far more moderate in private than he was prepared to be in public. If the parties had been forced to continue the negotiations, a constitutional settlement would almost certainly have been reached.

In the event, the war enabled all sides to agree to shelve the issue in a way that virtually guaranteed the renewal of the crisis at some later date. The Home Rule Act was passed as an all-Ireland measure but was accompanied by a Suspensory Order, which made it inoperable for the duration of the war. This was just about the worst outcome, short of actual civil war, that could possibly have been contrived for the Ulster Crisis.

Initially, the First World War seemed to have a positive effect upon Anglo-Irish relations. Support for the war was almost universal at the outset, with the fate of 'little Belgium' seeming to represent the interests of all small nations in their relations with those greater than themselves. In comparison to the threat of German militarism, even British rule seemed benign (see Chapter 7).

Ulster, already intoxicated with 'loyalism' to the British Crown, rushed to the colours in a frenzy of patriotism. In the rest of Ireland the response was less passionate but nevertheless the men of Catholic Ireland also answered the call and marched to slaughter in France and Belgium. Probably never before in her history had Ireland seemed to be so much in harmony with Britain.

For John Redmond the war seemed the ideal opportunity for nationalist Ireland to demonstrate her loyalty to the Crown and secure, by her war effort, the future of Ireland under Home Rule. Even before the war he had, for political reasons, taken control over the running of the Irish National Volunteers. Now he used his authority to bring them into the war. First he declared that the Volunteers would defend Ireland against invasion, thus releasing the regular army to fight the Germans in the front line. He then went further and urged them to fight overseas. This move was intended to reassure opinion in England of Irish loyalty, but to go so far was dangerous. Redmond was tolerated rather than respected by the leaders of the Volunteers and he was no Parnell in terms of his popular appeal.

The Easter Rising 1916

Key question
Was the Easter Rising a miscalculation on the part of the Irish Republicans?

Support for the war split the National Volunteers. The majority, reflecting the overwhelming sentiment of public opinion, sided with Redmond and followed the path of loyalty to the Empire by enlisting to fight against Germany. A minority, however, broke with Redmond, seeing the pro-war stance as collaboration with the British and a betrayal of Ireland's claim to nationhood. This drew them closer to Connolly's 'Citizen Army'.

Key date
Easter Rising – Irish Independence proclaimed but rebels defeated and leaders executed: 1918

Origins of the Rising

Herein lay the origin of the Easter Rising of 1916. To extreme nationalists the danger Britain faced in Europe was an opportunity to strike for freedom and set up an Irish Republic. A small group planned the Rising, including:

- Tom Clarke, a shopkeeper and former Fenian who had spent 15 years in prison for bombing offences
- Patrick Pearse, a teacher
- James Connolly, the trade union leader and head of the Citizen Army.

Pearse in particular was deeply committed to the idea that Ireland's future could be redeemed only by a 'blood sacrifice'. In other words, even if the intended revolution failed, it would have purged the soul of Ireland that had been compromised by years of collaboration with the British oppressors.

The outcome of the Rising

The rebellion was ill-timed, ill-planned and chaotically carried out. Many of these failings were not entirely the fault of the revolutionary leaders themselves:

- They were obliged to keep their plans secret, even from some of the key personnel involved, in order to maintain security.
- They counted on support from Germany in the form of an arms shipment, which was intercepted and so never arrived.
- The Commanding Officer of the National Volunteers, Eoin McNeill, was not informed of the plans until the last possible moment because the plotters were not sure how he would react. Initially he reluctantly gave his support, but when he learned that the arms shipment had been lost he did everything he could to stop the *coup* attempt. He cancelled the Volunteers' planned marches for Easter Sunday, which were supposed to be the starting point for the Rising. The rebel leaders were forced to improvise by rescheduling the marches and the rising for Easter Monday.

Militarily the Easter Rising was doomed to fail from the start. The number of rebels mobilised was far too few and they were inadequately armed. The declaration of Irish Independence and an Irish Republic was read by Patrick Pearse to a small, bewildered crowd, outside the General Post Office in Dublin, the headquarters of the Rebellion. The rebels successfully took over several key strategic points of access to the city, but had insufficient numbers to do more than wait for the reaction of the British Government. Even if the attempt had attracted immediate and widespread popular support, which it did not, the odds would have been against the rebels.

Key question
What were the immediate effects of the Rising?

Reaction to the Rising

In the event, the Rising flew in the face of popular feeling and was almost universally condemned by the Irish people. Nevertheless, the rebels held the British Army at bay for the best

The wreck of a burnt out car in front of bombed buildings forms a barricade during the Easter Rising, Dublin, 1916.

part of a week and, although many saw no actual fighting at all before surrendering, some fought with great skill and courage against overwhelming odds before they were killed or captured.

The centre of Dublin was reduced to rubble by British artillery fire. Fires raged out of control and the city took on the look of one of the war zones of the western front. This was glorious defeat when compared to the fiasco of the Fenian Rising of 1867, and its potential for exploitation by the extremists was immediately apparent to the Irish National Party, who urged leniency for the captured rebels upon the British Government.

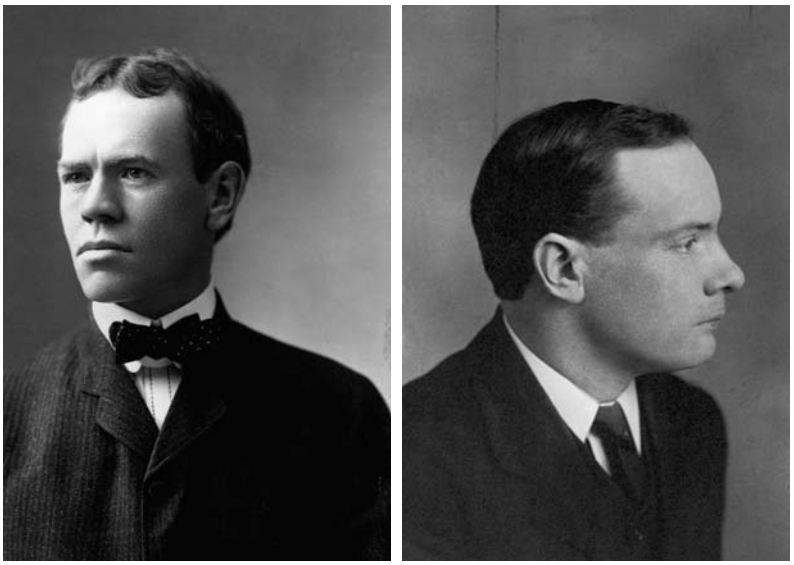
These pleas fell on largely deaf ears. Admittedly, of over 70 death sentences initially passed, the great majority were changed to terms of imprisonment, but any executions were likely to be controversial, given the nature of Irish history. In the end, 14 of the leaders, including Pearse and Connolly, were shot and one further execution took place of a rebel who had killed a policeman while resisting arrest. As the executions progressed, so the mood in Ireland began to change and the fears of the Irish MPs grew.

The aftermath of the Easter Rising 1916–18

Key question
How and why did the mood in Catholic Ireland change from one of support for Britain to support for Sinn Fein?

The policy of executions brought about a most profound change in the atmosphere in Ireland. Few ordinary people knew much about the revolutionary leaders (apart perhaps from James Connolly) or their aims. The Rising became popularly known as the 'Sinn Fein' Rebellion, although, in fact, Sinn Fein had no involvement in it.

Gradually, however, the leaders and those they had led were transformed into heroic figures. When the captured groups of rebels had been marched to the Dublin docks to be shipped off to prison on the mainland, they had needed army protection from angry mobs of mothers, fathers, wives, sisters and even children



The rebels in the Easter Rising – James Connolly (left) and Patrick Pearse (right).

of Irish soldiers fighting in France and Belgium, who had tried to attack them as cowards and traitors. Now these same people, for the most part, were demanding their release. The government was in too difficult a position, at a crucial stage in the war, to adopt a lenient policy towards those who had committed treason. Nevertheless, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that, had the executions not been carried out, the subsequent course of Irish history might have been very different.

The rebellion and its aftermath polarised attitudes in Ireland even further:

- In Protestant unionist opinion, the rebels were traitors who had got what they deserved.
- In Catholic nationalist opinion, they were heroes and martyrs.

Key question
Did the British Government mismanage its handling of the Easter Rebellion and Ireland during the rest of the Great War?

British government's actions 1917–18

From this point onwards, the prospect of achieving an all-Ireland settlement by consensus was virtually extinguished. In 1917, Asquith, alarmed that the Irish Question might sour relations with the then still neutral United States, offered immediate Home Rule with a provision for the exclusion of the six north-eastern counties of Ulster where there was a substantial Protestant majority. The government also sponsored a convention to discuss the long-term future of the six counties. These initiatives had no chance of success. The Sinn Fein Party, which was now an alliance of Griffith's original organisation and the remnants of the 1916 rebels, refused even to attend the convention.

At the end of 1917, the remainder of the rebels interned on the mainland were released as a goodwill gesture. But, though welcomed in Ireland, this did little to improve the image of the British Government. In 1918 it put the seal on the failure of its

Irish Policy by extending conscription to Ireland. Even the Irish National Party opposed this move, but its show of resistance to British authority came too late to save it from the backlash of public opinion in nationalist Ireland, now moving firmly in support of Sinn Fein.

The 1918 general election marked the end for the Irish National Party. It was decimated as a political force, winning only seven seats against the triumphant 73 won by Sinn Fein. Even allowing for some vote rigging by Sinn Fein, there is little doubt that the result reflected a genuine demand in Ireland for a substantial degree of independence from Britain. The elected Sinn Fein candidates refused to take their places at Westminster, preferring instead to set up 'Dail Eireann' – the Assembly of Ireland – claiming to represent the only legitimate legislative authority for the country.

Key dates

Sinn Fein Nationalist Party wins majority of Irish seats and declares Ireland independent from Great Britain: 1918

War of Irish independence: 1919–21

6 | The War of Irish Independence 1919–21

Key question

How did a bitter conflict between Irish republicans and the British Government end in negotiations for a settlement?

The existence in Ireland of a democratically elected parliament (**Dail**), profoundly changed the political situation, making it difficult for the British Government to claim that it was simply trying to control an extremist minority.

The main organisers of the independent Dail were Griffiths, Eamon de Valera (a commander in the 1916 Rising, originally sentenced to death but reprieved mainly on account of his US citizenship) and Michael Collins, a junior figure in the Rising, who had emerged as a leader of those imprisoned on the mainland. De Valera, who had been elected as president of Sinn Fein in October 1917, became the leader of the unofficial government, while Collins doubled as finance minister and organiser of the **Irish Republican Army (IRA)** as the military wing of the republican movement had now become known. In the early months of 1919, as the victorious allied powers assembled at Versailles to discuss the peace settlement to be imposed on Germany, the Irish leaders hoped that American support and the principle of self-determination for nationalities, upon which the peace was supposedly to be based, would ensure that their claim to independence would be forced upon the British Government without the need for any further military action. This was a forlorn hope. The US president, Woodrow Wilson had his own agenda for the peace conference and needed the co-operation of the British Prime Minister Lloyd George. He was not prepared to alienate him on behalf of Ireland.

As this became clear an atmosphere of bitterness began to set in and the situation quickly deteriorated. Local groups of IRA men began to take independent action to secure arms and explosives. Before long, acts of terrorism became commonplace. The British Government responded in kind. Additional men were drafted into the Royal Irish Constabulary, many of them ex-soldiers. Because there were too few police uniforms available, ex-army khaki clothing was issued to them, either jackets or trousers. The resulting mixture of clothing colours led to their

Key terms

Dail
Irish parliament.

Irish Republican Army (IRA)
The military wing of the republican movement.

Key term
'Black and Tans' The name given to the paramilitary unit of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

becoming known as the **'Black and Tans'**. Ex-army officers were recruited into a separate force known as the 'auxiliaries'. By using these forces the British Government met terror with terror and, between 1919 and 1921, Ireland descended into a spiral of brutality as two increasingly bitter and desperate groups battled for supremacy. To the IRA, it was a war of independence; to the British Government, it was a rebellion against the Crown; to most ordinary Irish people it was a time of despair. The unofficial Dublin government of de Valera had little real control over the activities of the IRA and Lloyd George's government was not much better placed in terms of the 'Black and Tans'. By 1921 pressure for a political solution to the conflict had began to mount from many quarters:

- The British Government, seeking a policy of international co-operation in the post-war world, was acutely embarrassed by the situation in Ireland and was aware that its methods there were arousing international outrage.
- The press in Britain, whilst not approving IRA violence was nevertheless increasingly critical of the actions of the 'Tans'.
- There were personal demands for peace from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the king.
- By the end of 1920 the IRA were desperately short of both men and weapons with which to continue the struggle.
- The Irish political leaders became willing to negotiate a compromise settlement – though they were not clear even amongst themselves as to exactly what form of compromise might be acceptable.

Key question
How did the British Government react to the post-war situation in Ireland?

7 | The Partition of Ireland and its Aftermath

Key date
Partition of Ireland: 1921

The British Government with which the Irish nationalists had to seek a compromise was a coalition of Conservatives and Liberals headed by the Liberal, Lloyd George. The main base of support for the Coalition came from the Conservative Party, which was then widely known as the Unionist Party on account of its strong support for the maintenance of the Union between Great Britain and Ireland. Any solution to the Irish question therefore had to be broadly acceptable to them. Lloyd George had already offered a legislative solution in the form of the Government of Ireland Act of 1920. This had proposed separate Home Rule parliaments for Northern and Southern Ireland, with a 'Council of Ireland' drawn from them to oversee an eventual unification. These terms were acceptable to the Ulster Unionists, because they saw that once their own Home Rule Parliament was established they could easily sabotage the idea of a Council representing all of Ireland and resist any move to future unification.

Not surprisingly however, the 1920 proposals were totally unacceptable to the nationalists. This led to a bizarre outcome of the Home Rule saga in that Ulster, so long the obstacle to Home Rule, actually embraced it as its future status. In June 1921 George VI, scorning threats of assassination, opened the first

Northern Ireland Parliament and used the occasion to deliver a plea for peace. De Valera immediately responded positively and an armistice was agreed early in July. Months of negotiations then ensued before Collins and Griffith were appointed to head a delegation to London to complete the final agreement.

The 'final settlement' of the Irish question, as it was seen at the time by many, was arrived at in a manner typical of the confused and off-the-cuff approach which had characterised much of the government of Ireland under the Union. Lloyd George was determined to end the crisis and he offered Dominion status (i.e. effectively independence within the British Empire, such as was enjoyed by Canada and Australia) to southern Ireland under the name of the 'Irish Free State'. Amazingly Lloyd George also offered to place Northern Ireland under the new Dublin government for a limited period. Collins and Griffith, equally stunned and delighted by the scale of the offer, accepted at once. Lloyd George had, however, overstepped the mark. Unionists in his government were outraged and vetoed the idea of forcing Ulster into even a temporary union with the south. Lloyd George was forced to withdraw that part of his plan. Instead he now threatened to renew the war and crush the IRA once and for all, unless the offer of Dominion status for the south was accepted at once. Collins and Griffith barely had time to consider this sudden reversal when Lloyd George offered a final twist entirely of his own. A boundary commission would be set up to arrange a final settlement of the north–south border and, Lloyd George hinted to Collins, would set a boundary so limiting to the north that reunification would become inevitable.

Whether Lloyd George really believed that such a scheme could ever be carried out, or whether he simply threw it into the negotiations to confuse Collins and Griffith knowing that it could never work, is difficult to determine. Lloyd George was never one to allow the end to be obstructed by the means. In any event the offer had the desired effect. Unwilling to see the war restarted and reassured by the offer of a boundary commission Collins and Griffith accepted the terms, even though they were aware that it would cause division in Dublin. In doing so they were, with the best of intentions, condemning the new Irish Free State to a period of bitter civil war. The offer of Dominion status, although far in advance of anything previously offered, involved continued Irish membership of the British Empire. This meant that an oath of allegiance to the British Crown would have to be sworn by the members of the Irish Parliament and government. The reigning British monarch would still be the Irish Head of State, as in any other Dominion.

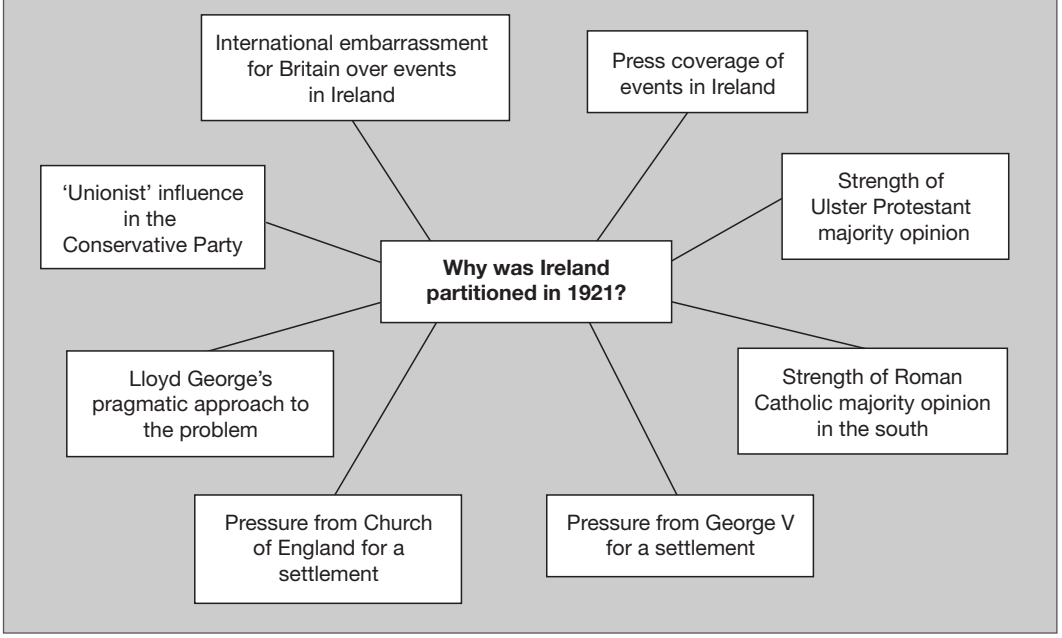
Civil war in Ireland

It was this oath of allegiance, rather than the issue of partition, that was too much for many republican nationalists to bear. A division developed between Collins and de Valera, for and against the settlement respectively. Collins won a small majority for his support of the settlement in the Dail, but the opposition was so

bitter that violent resistance to it soon broke out. Collins heading the new Irish Free State government moved ruthlessly to crush the opposition from the alienated section of the IRA. During 1922 the conflict resulted in murders and executions on a greater scale than 1919–21 as IRA dissidents were hunted down. Many of those that were not executed or imprisoned fled to the USA. Collins himself was assassinated during this civil war.

Many loose ends were left to cause problems for future generations. The boundary commission promised by Lloyd George was set up, but Lloyd George lost office in October 1922 and the commission eventually disappeared in 1925 having made no real progress and leaving areas with discontented local Roman Catholic majorities such as South Armagh, South Down and Fermanagh, under Northern Ireland's control. The Council of Ireland was a dead issue from the start as the Northern Ireland government simply refused to have anything to do with the idea. In the early 1960s the historian A.J.P. Taylor concluded that Lloyd George had solved the Irish Question 'once and for all'. However, before the 1960s had ended that verdict had been shown to be seriously premature.

Summary diagram: The partition of Ireland and its aftermath



Study Guide: AS Questions

In the style of AQA

(a) Explain why Sinn Fein was founded in 1905. (12 marks)

(b) 'It was the Unionists who ensured the failure of the 1912 Third Home Rule Bill by 1914.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. (24 marks)

Exam tips

(a) You will need to consider both long- and short-term factors here. You should briefly explain the broad reasons for the emergence of Irish nationalism and the political difficulties the nationalists faced in the years to 1905. However, you also need more specific factors linked to the rejection of Connolly's support for separatism through violent socialist revolution. Try to identify a main factor and offer some overall conclusion.

(b) You will need to decide whether you wish to agree or disagree and your answer should offer a balanced argument in support of your views, In agreement you will need to mention:

- Bonar Law's Blenheim speech
- the behaviour of the House of Lords
- the part played by Edward Carson
- the Solemn League and Covenant
- the activities of the Ulster Volunteer Force
- the Curragh Mutiny.

In disagreement, you will need to consider Redmond's views and actions, the part played by the Irish National Volunteers and Irish Republican Brotherhood and the 'failures' of the Liberal government to reach a compromise. You should try to reach a supported conclusion about responsibility for the stalemate situation 'by 1914'.

In the style of OCR A

Study the five sources on the issue of Irish Home Rule, and then answer **both** sub-questions. It is recommended that you spend two-thirds of your time in answering part **(b)**.

(a) Study Sources B and C. Compare these sources as evidence for attitudes towards the idea of Home Rule. (30 marks)

(b) Study all the sources. Use your own knowledge to assess how far the sources support the interpretation that Home Rule was unlikely to provide a permanent solution to the Irish question between 1890 and 1921. (70 marks)

Source A

From: Charles Stewart Parnell, speaking at a by-election in Kilkenny in 1890.

I have appealed to no [one] section of my country. My appeal has been to the whole Irish race, and if the young men are distinguished among my supporters it is because they know what I have promised them I will do. I have not promised to lead them against the armed might of England. I have told them that, so long as I can maintain an independent Irish party in the English Parliament, there is hope of our winning our legislative independence by constitutional means. … So long as we keep our Irish party, pure and undefiled from any contact or fusion with any English parliamentary party, independent and upright, there is good reason for us to hope that we shall win. … So long as such a party exists I will remain at its head. But when it appears to me that it is impossible to obtain Home Rule for Ireland by constitutional means, I have said this – and this is the extent and limit of my pledge … the pledge which has been accepted by the young men of Ireland … I will in a moment so declare it to the people of Ireland, and … I will take counsel with you as to the next step.

Source B

From: John Redmond, speaking in 1907, based his demand for the future self-government of Ireland on the concept of Home Rule.

The national demand, in plain and popular language, is simply this, that the government of every purely Irish affair shall be controlled by the public opinion of Ireland and by that alone. We demand this self-government as a right. For us the Act of Union has no binding moral or legal force. We regard it as our fathers regarded it before us, as a great criminal act … carried by violence and fraud. … We declare that … no number of Land Acts … no redress of financial grievances, no material improvement or industrial development, can ever satisfy Ireland until Irish laws are made and administered upon Irish soil by Irishmen … .

Source C

From: James Connolly, writing in the Workers' Republic *in February 1916.*

What is a free nation? A free nation is one which possesses absolute control over all its internal resources and powers. … Is that the case of Ireland? If the Home Rule Bill were in operation would that be the case of Ireland? To both questions the answer is: no, most emphatically, NO! A free nation must have complete control over its own harbours, to open or close them at will … Does Ireland possess such control? No. Will the Home Rule Bill give such control … it will not. … A free nation must have full power to nurse industries to health either by government encouragement or by government prohibition of the sale of goods of foreign rivals … Ireland … will have no such power under Home Rule. … A free nation must have full powers to alter, amend, or abolish or modify the laws under which the property of its citizens is held in obedience to the demand of its own citizens. … Every free nation has that power; Ireland does not have it, and is not allowed it by the Home Rule Bill … all the things that are essential to a nation's freedom are denied to Ireland now, and are denied to her under the provisions of the Home Rule Bill, and Irish soldiers in the English army are fighting in Flanders to win for Belgium, we are told, all those things which the British Empire, now as in the past, denies to Ireland.

Source D

From: the proclamation of Irish independence, Easter 1916.

In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom … supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe. … We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to … control of Irish destinies … we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State. … The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens … cherishing all its children … oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Source E

From: John Dillon, a leading Irish Nationalist MP, warns the British government of the dangers of executing the leaders of the Easter Rising, 11 May 1916.

I admit they were wrong … but they fought a clean fight … no act of savagery or act against the usual custom of war that I know of has been brought home to any leader … the great bulk of the population were not favourable to the insurrection … the insurgents [rebels] … got no popular support whatever. What is happening is that thousands of people in Dublin, who ten days ago were bitterly opposed to … the rebellion are now becoming infuriated against the government on account of these executions and … that feeling is spreading throughout the country. … We who speak for the vast majority of the Irish people, we who have risked a great deal to win the people to your side in this great crisis [the Great War], we who have … successfully endeavoured to secure that the Irish in America shall not go into an alliance with the Germans in that country – we, I think, were entitled to be consulted before this bloody course of executions was entered upon in Ireland.

Exam tips

(a) You need to focus tightly on attitudes and recognise that the sources represent two differing views towards the question of Irish nationalism by leading Irish nationalists. You should therefore draw attention to the two writers as well as the ideas they express in the sources. Redmond (Source B) represents the traditional mainstream attitude of the late nineteenth century that Irish problems could be resolved through Home Rule, which would means that 'purely Irish' matters would be dealt with by 'self-government'. This attitude contrasts strongly with the attitude represented in Source C which is a republican approach. Connolly was a socialist trade union organiser and one of the main leaders of the 1916 Rising. His attitude was that Home Rule did not create 'a free nation' and only full independence could serve Ireland's needs.

(b) You must pay close attention to achieving a balance of evidence in this question. Remember you are not being asked for your own judgement on the issue but rather how far the sources support the view. That is a distinction often missed by candidates which can misdirect their answer. Also remember that your own knowledge is most effectively used to interpret and explain the source evidence. You can, of course, use your own knowledge to add to the evidence, but the question is primarily about the sources so make sure you develop them to their full potential.

Both Sources A and B seem to suggest that Home Rule is the answer and that it would fulfil Ireland's needs. However, you should be aware that Parnell was often ambiguous about exactly what he meant by Home Rule and also made speeches in which he suggested that it might only be the first step to fuller independence. Sources C and D both represent the rejection of Home Rule and support the contention in the question. You should quote selectively from Source C to show Connolly's views on the characteristics of a 'free nation' and use your own knowledge with Source D to put that evidence into context. Source E is best used to show the dilemma that an event like the Rising raised for a traditional nationalist like Dillon, who believed in Home Rule but could not entirely reject the values of the Eater Rising.

In the style of OCR B

Answer both parts of your chosen question.

(a) How is Unionist opposition to the Home Rule in 1912–14 best explained?
[Explaining ideas, intentions and circumstances.] (25 marks)

(b) How significant was the Easter Rising as a factor in explaining the partition of Ireland?
[Explaining events and circumstances.] (25 marks)

Exam tips

Revise the General Introduction at the start of the Study Guide to Chapter 2 (page 39).

(a) Initial focus could be empathetic or causal or intentional, and then shift to each of the other two. Given the wording of the question, you need to build into your circles of explanation an evaluation of the relative importance of the various reasons you consider so you answer directly 'best explained'. Unionists consistently opposed all Home Rule so there was nothing new in the rejection of the 1912 Bill. Your examination of reasons can thus be divided into two sets of circles: (i) the longer-term fundamental issues behind their take on the Irish question and (ii) the short-term factors involved in the specific situation of 1912–14 when Ulster seemed on the brink of civil war. In both, remember that the term 'Unionists' covers two groups: the Conservative Party in Britain as well as the Unionists of Ulster.

The circles for (i) must focus on the 'Ulster problem' and the constitutional relationship between Britain and Ireland. Explain the gut hostility of Unionists to Home Rule – a powerful mixture of logic and prejudice mixing religion with politics to reject schemes that, it was argued, would impose Catholic rule (do not dismiss the very real religious bigotry of Edwardian Britain), compromise the security of Britain and shatter both the UK and the Empire. But go beyond this to show the influence of economics on both sides of the water – not just the extensive business interests of the English in Ireland, but the growing rivalry of Belfast and Dublin. For the short-term circles of (ii), consider the effect on opponents of the knowledge that the 1911 Parliament Act meant the 1912 Bill would become law. Did that make opponents more desperate? Events might suggest so: Bonar Law's irresponsible Blenheim speech, Carson's demand for exclusion of a nine-county Ulster, the Solemn League and Covenant, foundation of the UVF, the Curragh Mutiny, gun-running. In explaining behaviour in the circumstances of 1912–14, do not forget another influence on Unionists: the Nationalist revival. Whether civil war would have broken out we cannot say because war with Germany put everything on hold. What you can say is that opposition was changed in the later months of 1914 by the First World War. Even Carson realised that reality demanded compromise. Your rank ordering of reasons to 'best explain' opposition can go various ways, but

consider the combined influence of practical factors in (ii) on ideological influences from group (i). That way you can address the question's interest not just in 1912, but in 1913–14 as well.

(b) Begin with a causal or intentional explanation, and then switch so that both are covered. Note the question is not about 1916 and the Rising – it is about measuring the impact of 1916 on partition in 1920–1. So you must consider all the factors that brought about partition and then shaped the way it was carried out, and then weigh up how influential the Easter Rising was as compared to the other reasons/influences.

Whether your circles of explanation start or end with the Rising, it is the given factor in the question so you must give it serious consideration in a group of circles, paying attention to its significance in Ireland as well as London. Among Nationalists, Easter 1916 rapidly came to be seen as a heroic defeat and its dead (especially the 15 executed) became martyrs. It polarised Nationalist and Unionist opinion in Ireland, making attitudes to the Irish question even more entrenched. If an all-Ireland agreement might have been possible (just) in 1914, the Rising made it far less likely thereafter. Was the Rising therefore the reason why partition became the only way out? Not necessarily. London's decision to introduce conscription in 1918 was massively resented and produced the pro-Sinn Fein landslide in the general election that year. Your remaining set of circles must assess the significance of other influences: Lloyd George's determination to settle the Irish question once and for all, and do it by pragmatic means; the influence of the Unionists, now the dominant partner in Britain's coalition government; pressure from George V for a settlement; the on-going hostility of Ulster's Unionists to 'rule by Dublin'. Also, you should devote several circles to considering the particular issues of circumstance post-1918 that were also significant drivers of decision-making: (i) whether Unionist domination of the Lloyd George coalition so changed the landscape that a united Ireland was impossible; (ii) and whether, especially after the traumas of 1914–18, London had reached the point where it would agree to anything just 'to be rid of Ireland'.

7 Reform, Confrontation and Total War

POINTS TO CONSIDER
The First World War had a major impact on Britain. By its end so much had changed that many people felt that Britain was almost unrecognisable as the country that had entered the war in 1914. This chapter will examine the impact of the war through the following themes:

- British politics on the eve of the First World War
- The decline of the Liberal Party – was it doomed before the start of the war?
- British foreign policy and the outbreak of war in 1914
- The political impact of the war
- Women and the war
- The social and economic impact of the war

Key dates

1914	Britain declares war on Germany and her allies
1915	Coalition government formed of Liberals, Conservatives and Labour
1916	Lloyd George forms a new coalition government
	The Liberal Party splits and Asquith goes into opposition
1918	Act to enfranchise all men over 21 and most women over 30
	Victory over Germany

Key question
How genuinely opposed to each other were the Conservatives and Liberals in this period?

1 | British Politics on the Eve of the First World War

Much of the period covered in this book has been concerned with confrontations of one kind or another: Ireland; votes for women; democracy versus privilege; free trade versus protectionism.

In particular, the relationship between Liberalism and Unionism seems to have been one of unremitting hostility over a period of years:

- The issue of tariff reform raised by Joseph Chamberlain and its eventual acceptance by the Unionist Party seemed to polarise party principles into the opposite corners of free trade and protectionism.
- The constitutional crisis confirmed that division and led into the bitter period of confrontation surrounding the Ulster crisis of 1912–14 (see pages 116–19).

On the eve of the First World War, therefore, it would seem at first sight that the two main political parties had never been further apart in their policies and rarely more hostile in their attitude to each other.

The bitter political climate worried many contemporaries who saw in it the seeds of the disintegration of the political system. Few could have predicted that a war would soon engulf Europe and, temporarily at least, make the divisions that had previously emerged irrelevant.

Political consensus?

Key dates

Britain declares war on Germany and her allies: 1914

Coalition government formed of Liberals, Conservatives and Labour: 1915

Lloyd George's proposal for a coalition government (see page 71), dismissed as impractical in 1910, became a reality in 1915 under the pressure of war. Coalitions were to rule the country for 21 out of the next 30 years. Of course, the circumstances that brought these coalitions about and then kept them together were exceptional, but the ease with which politicians of all parties accepted them reveals something deeper about the nature of politics in the period before the First World War.

The reality was that, underneath the apparent hostility, there was a greater degree of consensus than the confrontational atmosphere would suggest. This was particularly true of the leaders of the parties. Their public clashes seemed to be the essence of the highly charged political atmosphere. Yet, all the time, behind the scenes, these same leaders were to be found seeking compromises and conciliations which were often wrecked, not by their mutual hostilities, but by the nature of the problems they were seeking to resolve.

For example, during the constitutional crisis, the failure to reach a compromise was largely due to the fact that neither side could afford, politically, to be seen to be giving in, rather than to the existence of a genuinely unbridgeable gulf. During the Ulster crisis it was the entrenched positions of the Irish Nationalist and Ulster Unionist leaders, rather than those of Asquith and Bonar Law, which made progress in the 1914 negotiations impossible (see page 119).

On a broad range of issues there was a remarkable degree of consensus among the major politicians on both sides on the following issues.

Social reform

The Unionists were more willing to consider social reform than is often supposed and, after 1903, free traders and tariff reformers within the Unionist Party sought to outbid each other with

promises of reform. Once the economy went into a slump between 1907 and 1910 the Unionists, by now committed to some kind of new deal on tariffs, linked their policy to social reform and tried to compete with the Liberals on the issue. The desire to preserve values of individual responsibility in social policy was, if anything, stronger among the more traditional Liberals than it was among the Unionists.

Female suffrage

The demand for female suffrage found both supporters and opponents among the Liberals and Unionists and both sides were ultimately more concerned about the practical political problems that the issue posed than they were about the moral principle.

Free trade versus protectionism

Even the division between Liberalism and Unionism over protection was not as clear-cut as it appeared. The support of the Liberal leaders for free trade was a political necessity. Privately, leaders such as Asquith and Lloyd George knew that there was a case to be made for the reform of fiscal policy: specifically, the means of obtaining government revenue.

The Budget of 1909 was barely sufficient to meet the projected spending requirements of immediate policies. Even with Lloyd George's unprecedented tax increases, the government still required a £3 million transfer from the **sinking fund** in order to balance the books. It was obvious that some other method of raising revenue would be needed in the longer term if further social reform were to be contemplated.

Key term

Sinking fund
A government fund into which money is put for paying off government debts as they become due for repayment.

Internal divisions

The picture that emerges of political life in the period before the First World War is one in which the two main parties were as divided internally as they were from each other. This is especially true of the relationships between the party leaders and their respective followers.

Both Liberal and Unionist leaders had to face the problem of trying to reconcile conflicting attitudes within their parliamentary parties and in the constituencies at large. Frequently it was not simply a case of trying to accommodate differing opinions, but also of trying to force party members to abandon their prejudices and face up to political realities. It is hardly surprising in these circumstances that the party leaders frequently found it easier to deal with each other, than to satisfy the demands of their own supporters.

Key question
Was the Liberal Party doomed to decline in 1914?

2 | The Decline of the Liberal Party

In 1936, at a point where the fortunes of the Liberal Party had sunk low and its future existence was a matter in some doubt, G.R. Dangerfield, in what became a famous book, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, put forward an explanation for the

decline of the once great party. According to Dangerfield, the crucial period in the Liberal decline was 1911–14, following the constitutional crisis, during which basic inadequacies and limitations of liberalism had made the government incapable of governing effectively.

This view did not gain universal acceptance in the years that followed. The general trend in studies of the Liberal Party was to look for alternative explanations for the Party's decline. A particular view emerged that Liberal decline had set in much earlier than Dangerfield supposed – the idea that it might not have been in decline before 1914 was not seriously considered.

The topic became more controversial however with the appearance in 1966 of Trevor Wilson's book *The Downfall of the Liberal Party*, which argued that the decline of the Liberal Party was the result of the damaging split that developed during the First World War between Asquith and Lloyd George (see page 146). According to this view the Liberal Party remained an effective political force in 1914 and could have gone on indefinitely as a major party competing with the Conservatives for power.

Until the publication of Wilson's book, the decline of the Liberal Party had received little attention from Labour historians since it had been assumed that the fall of the Party could be satisfactorily explained by the Dangerfield thesis or the various alternatives and, more importantly, as the natural result of the rise of the Labour Party.

The impact of the First World War

The impact of the First World War had been regarded as simply the accelerator of a natural process of political evolution. The Labour Party, as the fittest instrument for advancing social reform and representing working-class aspirations, had inherited the role of opposition to the forces of conservatism.

Following the publication of the 'Wilson thesis', a number of other historians began to develop the argument that the Liberal Party had still had a bright future in British politics on the eve of the war. These historians, for the most part, concentrated on the impact of 'New Liberalism' in order to argue that the party had freed itself of the limitations that had been imposed on it by Gladstonian principles, and had become a party with a relevant message and electoral appeal in an increasingly democratic and class-based political climate. The clear implication of this view was that the Labour Party was destined either to remain a minor third force on the political fringe or to be absorbed into the Liberal Party. Such a concept naturally incensed those Labour historians for whom the rise of the Labour Party was a matter of unquestionable destiny.

A series of studies intended to counter Wilson's arguments came to a conclusion in 1974, in the publication of Ross McKibbin's book, *The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910–1924*, which emphasised the extent to which the Labour Party was a competitor, rather than a collaborator, with the Liberals and to insist that Labour was making genuine inroads into Liberal

support. This argument rests upon analyses of Labour progress in local elections during the period 1911–14 and on studies that show that rivalry between the Liberals and Labour at local level was often intense.

The less ideologically committed historians have also contributed to the debate about the long-term survival of the Liberal Party by questioning the strength of enthusiasm for the principles of New Liberalism among traditional Liberal supporters and party activists.

Supporters of the future viability of the Liberal Party have tried, in their turn, to counter the attacks on the Wilson thesis by arguing that, but for the outbreak of war in 1914, the Liberals would have sustained or even increased their electoral appeal. Certainly there is nothing in the attitudes of the Liberal Party itself to suggest that it was lacking in confidence or living in fear of the Labour Party. After all, in 1913, the Liberal Government passed a Trade Union Act permitting trade unions to use funds for political purposes, a reversal of the Osborne Judgement of 1909 (see page 92), which had done so much to damage Labour Party funds. This was hardly the action of a government fearful of a dangerous rival.

Land reform

There is no doubt that the Liberal Government intended to embark upon a major political offensive in the period before the First World War. It was Lloyd George who supplied the strategy. In 1912 he began to revive the idea of land reform. The intention was to offer a comprehensive package of reforms, including a guaranteed minimum wage for agricultural workers with rent tribunals to ensure fair rents and, possibly, even arrange for deductions to be made directly from rental income to fund the minimum wage.

Lloyd George also intended to include urban land in the reforms, though he had no specific ideas for this more complex area. Initially, he merely indicated that he hoped that rural land reform would help to halt the flow of migrants from the land to the towns and thus help to raise urban wages. Lloyd George intended the land campaign to be the centrepiece of the Liberal revival which would carry them through the next general election, due by the end of 1915 at the latest. He set up a Land Enquiry Committee to provide detailed information and proposals. The committee, however, was not an independent group. It was a political body appointed and directed by Lloyd George and financed privately by some of his wealthy political associates.

The land campaign was specifically intended to damage the Unionists electorally. It aimed to consolidate Liberal support in the rural constituencies as well as play on the sympathies of the urban working class. It was also intended to increase divisions among the Unionists, who found it difficult to respond with land reforms of their own, without risking upsetting at least some of their supporters.

However, the need for some kind of initiative of this kind was urgent. By 1912 it was apparent that land taxation as envisaged in the 1909 Budget was never going to raise the amount of revenue needed to fund even the existing provision of social welfare, let alone any extension of it. The National Insurance scheme was far from popular with many sections of the working classes, especially the lower paid, such as agricultural labourers, who saw the contributions as a burden. Liberalism desperately needed a new electoral appeal and, by 1914, the evidence of by-elections seemed to suggest that the land campaign was having the desired effect. Moreover, the Unionists were openly divided between those supporting the Unionist Social Reform Committee, who wished to respond to Lloyd George's campaign with their own radical proposals, and members of the reactionary 'Land Union' who were still hoping to commit the Party to the repeal of the 1909 land taxes.

Irreversibly in decline?

Ultimately, the question of the strength of the Liberal Party, in 1914, must remain a matter of historical controversy. Because the First World War came when it did, the impact of the land campaign might have had on the next general election cannot be known. Similarly, it cannot be certain that the progress made by the Labour Party before 1914, at local level, provides a genuine guide to its likely fortunes in a general election. Success in local elections is not a sure indicator that similar success would be sustained in a general election. After all, the Labour Party lost a series of parliamentary by-elections between 1910 and 1914 which reduced their seats to 36 by the eve of the First World War.

On balance there would appear to be no conclusive evidence to suggest that the Liberals were already in irreversible decline in 1914. Even leading members of the Labour Party, such as Ramsay MacDonald, did not rule out an ultimate alliance with the Liberals at that stage. Similarly, the land campaign clearly shows that the Liberals were capable of developing a significant new initiative in matters of social and economic policy.

3 | British Foreign Policy and the Outbreak of War in 1914

Key question
What were the main issues that shaped British foreign policy before 1914?

The government's decision in August 1914 to enter the war against Germany on the side of France and Russia was the logical consequence of the application of long-standing principles on which foreign policy had been based for centuries. These principles can be identified as relating to the following concerns:

- strategic and security issues
- trade and commercial issues
- the balance of power and the maintenance of peace.

Strategy and security issues

In strategic and security terms, British interests required that the Royal Navy be in control of the approaches to Britain across the Atlantic and in the North Sea. Additionally the Navy was required to defend the trade routes of the Empire. This meant in particular the maintenance of control of the Mediterranean, which was essential for the protection of the Suez Canal. The Canal in turn was vital to communications with India. From at least the 1870s, India had been seen as central to the maintenance of the Empire as a whole and thus played a key role in shaping British foreign policy.

British determination to remain in control of Ireland was shaped by the fear that it could be used as a base for attacks on the British mainland if it fell under the domination of a continental power. Equally the 'Low Countries' – Belgium and Holland – were possible starting points for an invasion across the English Channel. Britain could not aim to occupy these countries but it could and did aim to ensure their independence and neutrality as the best guarantee of British strategic interests.

Trade and commercial issues

As a trading nation, Britain needed to export her produce and import raw materials for her industries. The cotton industry in particular was totally dependent on imported raw cotton and exported over three-quarters of its output. Here again the Low Countries were important. The port of Antwerp was a major trade route into Europe and its neutral status guaranteed access to markets. British trade was global and British naval supremacy was an economic issue as well as a protection against invasion.

The balance of power

The balance of power in Europe meant, from the British point of view, that no one continental power should dominate over the others. Since the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, Germany had been acknowledged as the most powerful nation in Europe and by 1900 there was already some Anglo-German tension mounting. However, during the course of the nineteenth century Britain had increasingly seen the maintenance of peace in Europe as a key objective. War, once seen as a means of gaining resources and markets, was now more generally seen as a destructive force leading to the loss of trade and the distortion of markets.

Key question
Why did Britain retreat from 'splendid isolation'?

The abandonment of 'splendid isolation'

During the period 1895–1914 the pursuit of these objectives led Britain to adopt new methods that have sometimes been described as bringing about a 'diplomatic revolution'. Until 1902 Britain maintained a policy of avoiding direct commitments to other powers in the form of specific alliances. This policy became known as 'splendid isolation' as it was based on the assumption that Britain's power was such that alliances were unnecessary and likely to lead to conflicts in which Britain had no stake.

From the late 1890s, however, a change of policy took shape. There was worldwide opposition to Britain over the Boer War and increased tension with both France and Germany. In addition there was a long-standing concerns about Russian designs on India. Salisbury's government concluded that something needed to be done to reduce the potential for conflict and the risk of a major coalition of powers forming an anti-British front.

- In 1902 Britain concluded a formal alliance with Japan that helped reduce a worrying position of naval shortfall in the Far East. Japan had a strong navy.
- In 1904 an 'Entente Cordiale' or friendly understanding was reached with France. Under its terms, the two countries agreed to respect each other's interests in colonial affairs and end their rivalry overseas. It was not a formal alliance but it heralded the start of increasing co-operation between France and Britain made all the more concrete by the concerns both countries had about the increasingly erratic and aggressive behaviour emanating from Germany.
- The agreement with France was extended in 1907 to include France's ally Russia, so helping to reduce decades of hostility. Britain wanted to extend this system of agreements to include one with Germany but this failed to materialise. In 1899 and again in 1901, attempts had been made to find a basis for a general agreement with Germany and possibly even an alliance. Germany, however, wanted Britain to join the German alliance system with Austria and Italy and this Britain would not do because of the risk of being drawn into conflicts with the French and Russians.

Relations with Germany became a continuing problem. There was a clash in 1895 over the 'Jameson Raid' in southern Africa (see page 17). From the late 1890s German naval policy of expanding the German fleet caused further concern. Britain needed naval supremacy to maintain its position as a great power. Britain saw Germany as a great power in Europe with a large and modern army at its disposal. This alone might be a cause of concern. If Germany intended to challenge Britain at sea then an eventual conflict was inevitable. Diplomatic incidents in Morocco in 1905 and again in 1911 brought France and Germany into dispute and Britain was forced to take the French side. Attempts to find a basis for a naval agreement with Germany came to nothing.

The outbreak of war

Key question
Why did Britain go to war with Germany in August 1914?

Despite the concerns about Anglo-German relations, specific rivalries or tensions between Britain and Germany played almost no part in the British decision to declare war on Germany on 4 August 1914. The assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Bosnian Serb at Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 scarcely seemed to touch British interests at all. As late as 23 July, Lloyd George was telling the House of Commons that Anglo-German relations were better than they had been for many years.

Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, riding in a car in Sarajevo before the assassination which led to the First World War because of the alliance system.

What decided the issue was the German declaration of war against France.

Britain was already involved in an informal naval alliance with France, under which France would defend the Mediterranean, and Britain the Channel and the North Sea in the event of war. The fact that even the Cabinet knew little about the extent of Anglo-French preparations served to create confusion and hesitation at Cabinet level when matters drew to a head, but even this could not ultimately affect the outcome. The fact that the fate of Belgium lay bound up with German military plans helped to focus the minds of the doubters, like Lloyd George, who found it hard to countenance the horror of the impending conflict.

Key question
Why was Belgium important to Britain?

The Belgium question

The issue of Belgium was significant because Belgian independence was a long-standing British commitment that even Gladstone had been willing to contemplate fighting to defend. That Belgium was a small power facing a mighty adversary was convenient for impressing public opinion and for staking a claim to the moral high ground; it was not in itself decisive. Britain could turn a blind eye to the plight of small powers faced by aggression when it was expedient to do so.

The Germans had long planned to attack France through Belgium if war came and the reaction of the British hardly weighed with them at all in this respect. Although the Germans hoped that by some means the British might be kept out of the war they never counted on this in their planning. On the contrary, they had always assumed that they must prepare for the contingency that Britain would assist France. Since they also assumed the war would be short they attached little importance to the British threat – the British Army being, in the words of the Kaiser, 'contemptible' in terms of its size.

Nothing that Sir Edward Grey could have done in his negotiations with the Germans could have averted the eventual outcome. He has been criticised for not making the British position clear enough to the Germans. On the contrary, he made the position entirely clear: Germany was not to count on British neutrality; France and Russia were not to count on British support. This sounds paradoxical but, in diplomatic terms, it was not. A Russo-German war, not involving Britain, was theoretically possible but a Franco-German war that did not involve Britain, was not.

In practice the Germans were not concerned to avoid a war with France, so the situation remained hypothetical. For Britain the issue was clear. To stand aside was to risk allowing the complete domination of the continent of Europe by Germany. This was inconceivable on strategic and economic grounds, to say nothing of the question of British prestige. Neutrality in 1914 would have destroyed the balance of power once and for all and, with it, the independence of Great Britain.

Grey put the issue squarely to the House of Commons on 3 August 1914 before the actual declaration of war by Germany against France. Russia and Germany had been at war since 1 August and Germany had invaded Luxembourg on 2 August, at the same time demanding freedom of passage through Belgium in return for a guarantee of Belgian territorial integrity:

> I ask the House from the point of view of British interests, to consider what may be at stake. If France is beaten in a struggle of life and death, beaten to her knees, loses her position as a great Power, becomes subordinate to the will and power of one greater than herself ... If, in a crisis like this, we run away from those obligations of honour and interest as regards the Belgian Treaty, I doubt whether, whatever material force we might have at the end, it would be of very much value in face of the respect we should have lost.

4 | The Political Impact of the War

Key question
Why did the First World War have such a crucial effect on the Liberal and Labour Parties?

The question of Britain's entry into the war in August 1914 was divisive for the two main British parties, the Liberals and the Unionists. It was most divisive of all for the Labour Party.

The Liberal Party

The Liberal Party contained significant numbers of people with pacifist instincts who opposed war on moral principle. These people had to decide whether to sacrifice their views for the national interest or stick to their principles. Two Cabinet ministers did resign on these grounds. There were also some Liberals who had long admired Germany as a modern state with an advanced system of social welfare. For them the declaration of war was a particular blow. Most Liberals, however, were suspicious of German militarism and disliked the German constitution, which gave direct power to the Kaiser and his Chancellor. Most Liberals were able to support the war in principle. However, the methods of fighting it, **Total War** as it became known, with conscription and extensive state intervention in economic affairs, became very difficult for Liberals to accept.

Key term

Total War
Where all the resources of a country – human, industrial and commercial – are mobilised to serve the war effort.

The Conservative Party

The Conservative Party was the most united in its support for the war, but it still contained a significant minority, including some at a high level, who felt that war against Germany was a mistake. These Conservatives saw Germany, with its strongly authoritarian system of government in which the Kaiser held real power, as a bastion against revolution. In addition, they were concerned over the disruptive impact the war would have on economic and financial affairs, given that Germany was Britain's biggest trading partner.

The Labour Party

The Labour Party was the most deeply divided of all (see pages 94–6). There were those in the Party, pacifists and others, who regarded the war as essentially a capitalist conflict in which the working classes would be the victims. This view stemmed from the Marxist idea that war and imperialism were simply devices of the ruling classes to prop up declining capitalism. Despite the influence of pacifism and Marxism, however, there was also a strong patriotic response, particularly prevalent among some of the trade union leaders, which argued that ideology must take second place to national danger.

Initial war policy

Initially the Liberal Government aimed to continue in office to conduct the war along traditional lines, which meant raising volunteer armies and relying on private companies to purchase the war supplies needed for the armed forces.

The Conservatives agreed to support the government as a 'loyal opposition' for the duration of the conflict. Direct opposition came only from a minority of the more outspoken Irish Nationalist MPs and a small group of dissident Labour MPs, and even this opposition was fairly low-key. Since the press also decided to suspend political hostilities, the political status quo seemed set to be maintained.

However, it quickly became apparent that the government could not meet the demands of the war simply by relying on the existing industrial structure. By early 1915 there was an acute shortage of munitions of all kinds and especially artillery shells. The 'shell scandal' led to the press threatening to withdraw its support and publicly expose the shortages. The Conservatives said that if this happened they would have no alternative but also to condemn the government. The result was that, in May 1915, Asquith and the senior Liberals agreed to form a coalition government in which the leading Conservatives took Cabinet posts along with one member of the Labour Party.

Liberal decline

In December 1916, the coalition foundered. Asquith had for months been prey to depression and excessive drinking. Shattered by the death of his son on the western front, he became a pathetic shadow of the once brilliant politician he had been. His inability to provide adequate leadership led to a move within the coalition, not to oust him from the premiership as such, but to hand over the day-to-day running of the war to a new small committee headed by Lloyd George.

Lloyd George had been given the job of **Minister of Munitions** in the 1915 coalition and had made such a success of it that he was now seen on all sides as the most dynamic and effective war politician the nation possessed. Asquith refused to accept the figurehead role allotted to him in this proposal and this forced a crisis in which Lloyd George and several other Cabinet ministers threatened to resign. In the end, in 1916, Asquith himself resigned and Lloyd George became Prime Minister.

Asquith went into opposition supported by roughly two-thirds of the Liberal Party. It was a conflict that was to destroy the Liberal Party's position in the British political system and allow the Labour Party to emerge as the natural party of opposition to the Conservatives.

Key dates

Lloyd George forms a new coalition government: 1916

The Liberal Party splits and Asquith goes into opposition: 1916

Key term

Minister of Munitions
A completely new government department set up specifically to oversee munitions manufacture. Women were heavily recruited to work in the newly expanded factories.

5 | Women and the War

Key question
How did the outbreak of war affect the position of women?

One political issue that was effectively resolved by the war was the question of female suffrage. In July 1915 the WSPU organised a great rally to demonstrate women's support for the war effort. Following the rally, Mrs Pankhurst met Lloyd George, who was by then Minister of Munitions to demand a fuller role for women in the war. As a result the following agreements were reached:

- The WSPU would suspend their demand for female suffrage for the time being.
- Women would be allowed into virtually all forms of employment, including munitions production.
- Fair minimum wage rates would be set.
- On certain types of work, where pay was determined by output, women would receive equal pay with men.

A female munitions worker in 1917.

The vital role played by women in the war effort in the years that followed transformed many people's perceptions of women and their fitness for the parliamentary vote. Women engaged in many new forms of employment that had hitherto been considered only suitable for men. In the munitions industry, the dangers of the work resulted in many casualties. In one incident in a munitions factory in 1916, over 50 people were killed, most of whom were women. In such circumstances serious resistance to the idea of the female suffrage simply crumbled away. For example, Asquith, one of the bitterest opponents of the idea before the war, announced his conversion to the idea of women's political rights in 1917.

The importance of the war

Although some historians have questioned the importance of the war in bringing forward the parliamentary vote for women, the evidence to support the case remains compelling. It is true that some moves for conciliatory discussions between the government and supporters of the women's suffrage were in prospect just before the war, but there is no hard evidence that the Liberals were prepared to adopt female suffrage as official policy. The war was critical in overcoming the objections of those who felt that allowing any significant female suffrage was giving in to violence. In any case women's votes were not the only issue. The war also overcame the last remaining objections to full voting rights for men. In 1918 an Act for substantially extending the right to vote was passed:

- All men over the age of 21 became entitled to vote.
- Men over the age of 19 who had seen active service in the war got the vote for the next general election.

- Women over 30 became entitled to vote. Before the war any such extensive proposal for the female suffrage would have been unthinkable.

Key date
Act to enfranchise all men over 21 and all women over 30: 1918

Although women had not achieved full political equality with men, this was not to be delayed for long. In 1928, a Conservative government headed by Stanley Baldwin introduced legislation to give women the vote at 21.

6 | The Social and Economic Impact of the War

Key question
How did the war affect other aspects of British society?

Women

As seen above, the war had a significant effect on the political perception of women. This was, in effect, a social change as well. Women worked with men on more equal terms and became more financially and personally independent than ever before. With men away at the front, wives and mothers became the decision-makers in the home – even if they had not been so previously.

Class

Class distinctions began to blur. The upper classes had to 'rough it' comparatively as they were deprived of the vast retinues of servants to which they were accustomed. Girls went into war work rather than domestic service – not only was the pay better, but it was a national duty. At the front men from different social classes shared a common experience of horror and hardship, which led to despair and anger in equal proportions. Unquestioning acceptance by the lower classes of deference to their social superiors was at an end – it might be accepted, but it would be questioned.

It would be absurd to suggest that class harmony in adversity ran deep or that deeply rooted social prejudices were overturned. It is fair to say that, after the war, many social barriers and conventions were readopted or at least reimposed. However, nothing could wholly eradicate the social effects of over four years of Total War. As the historian A.J.P. Taylor observed: 'The First World War cut deep into the consciousness of modern man.' After it, nothing could ever really be the same.

Economy

What was true in the social sense was even truer in economic terms. If social change was hesitant and variable, the economic impact was bold and thorough. It quickly became apparent in 1914 that a modern war could not be fought without government intervention.

Initially the government passed a Defence of the Realm Act that gave it control of the armaments factories, but little was done to increase output. The resulting shell shortages led to a drastic rethink, which enabled Lloyd George to build munitions production to the required level.

Government intervention, however, went much further than just munitions. To fight a Total War, the whole population and the entire economic resources of the nation had to be mobilised. Vast sums of money had to be raised and deployed. Labour had to be

directed and controlled. Output had to be specified and delivered on time. To achieve victory the financial and economic life of the nation had to be planned. To be effective, planning had to be supported and carried through by state power.

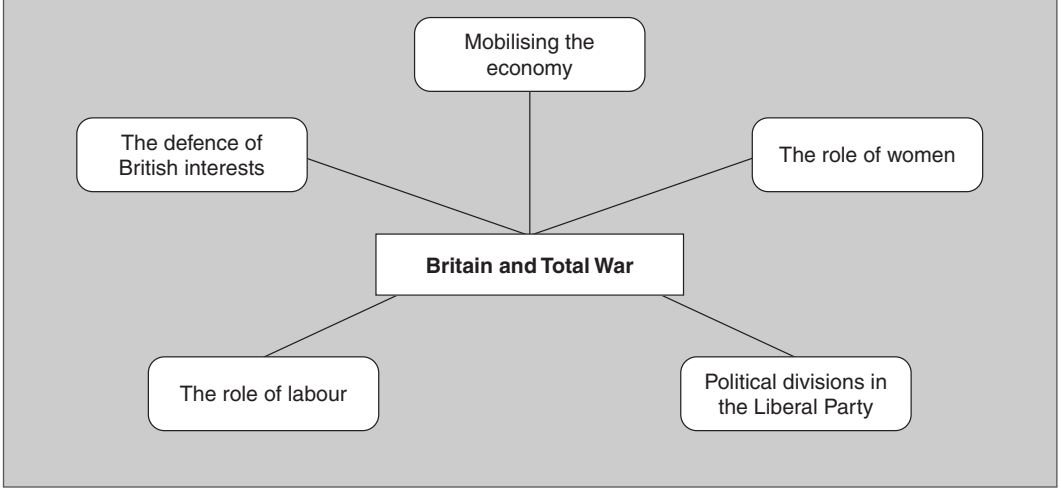
In 1915, a new Defence of the Realm Act gave the government virtually total control of the labour force and the economic resources of the country. Also in 1915, the trade unions, in return for guarantees on wages and conditions, reached an understanding with Lloyd George called the 'Treasury Agreements' in which they agreed to a no-strike arrangement so long as the war lasted. In order to increase efficiency while the war lasted, the unions also agreed to relax the usual restrictive working practices. A vast amount of government money was pumped into every aspect of war production. From being a largely food-importing nation in 1914, Britain became 80 per cent self-sufficient in food by 1918. The mining industry was effectively **nationalised** during the war. Government controls were imposed on wages, employment conditions, profits and prices.

Key term

Nationalisation
The taking over by the government of private companies so that they are owned by the state.

Such a massive transformation of the economy could not be wholly reversed at the end of the war. Even though there was initially an attempt to restore pre-war conditions, post-war governments found themselves increasingly compelled to intervene in economic matters.

Summary diagram: Britain and Total War



Summary diagram: The impact of the First World War

Women

The position of women had changed forever. Although they could not, for the most part, hold on to the types of jobs they had done during the war even though they now had the vote the experience of war had destroyed the idea that men were the fountain of all wisdom.

Government

Government had interfered in the everyday lives of individuals and the affairs of private businesses to a degree that would have been unthinkable before the war.

Labour Party

The Labour Party had emerged as a participant in government and a future contender to govern Britain.

Liberal Party

The Liberal Party had suffered irreparable damage in an internal division that finished it as a party of government in its own right.

Study Guide: AS Questions

In the style of AQA

(a) Explain why a coalition government was established in Britain in 1915. (12 marks)

(b) 'Without the coming of war, the Liberal Party could have survived as a major political force.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. (24 marks)

Exam tips

The cross-references are intended to take you straight to the material that will help you to answer the questions.

(a) You should consider the points raised on pages 145–6 explaining not only the value of coalition government in war time but also the specific circumstances that brought the Liberals to this point including the Defence of the Realm Act, the immediate problems posed by the German advance and the munitions crisis of 1915. You might refer to the weakness of the Liberal position before the war, the suspension of the Irish Home Rule Bill and the need to involve Conservatives to create a viable government. Try to blend the long- and short-term factors to reach a well-supported conclusion.

(b) Issues concerning the decline of the Liberal Party are discussed on pages 139–40 and page 146. You should try to provide a balanced answer looking not only at examples of unpreventable liberal decline but also at factors which suggest it could have survived. Factors supporting the view include: the attractions of the new Liberal philosophy and the suggestion that the Liberals might have as easily absorbed Labour as vice versa. The war undermined Liberal values, created a coalition government, led to 'irresponsible' behaviour by Lloyd George and caused his fatal split with Asquith. Factors disagreeing with the view include the 'inevitable' rise of Labour, the Liberals' difficulties in the pre-war years and suggestions that decline was firmly underway before 1914. Try to argue a supported case to reach a substantiated conclusion.

In the style of OCR B

Answer **both** parts of your chosen question.

(a) How strong was the Liberal Party in 1914?
[Explaining states of affairs, ideas and attitudes.] (25 marks)

(b) How significant was the breach between Asquith and Lloyd George in explaining the decline of the Liberal Party during 1918–22?
[Explaining events and circumstances.] (25 marks)

Exam tips

Revise the General Introduction at the start of the Study Guide to Chapter 2 (page 39).

(a) The initial focus could be empathetic or causal, and then shift to the other. Given the wording of the question you need to build into your circles of explanation an evaluation of the relative importance of the various reasons you consider so you answer directly 'best explained'. Beware of making any assumptions about Liberal 'decline'. The reasons for its decline as a party of government are still hotly debated and within that there is major disagreement about when their core collapse occurred. You will not be expected to consider that historical debate, but you could bring into your essay anything you know about it that is relevant (e.g. some of which is referred to in this chapter). Above all, remember you are an historian so you know that almost nothing is 'inevitable'.

To assess the strength of the Liberals, you will have to weigh up the relative positions of the Unionist and Labour parties as well. Your primary focus must be kept on the Liberals, but each opponent could have its own circles of explanation (in which case, keep trying to cross-reference between the parties: after all, they influenced and were influenced by each other). The last thing you want is three totally separates essays, linked only by a conclusion at the end. Labour's circle can be brief. The party was small (its vote falling from 7 to 6 per cent in the two 1910 elections) and scored badly in by-elections in 1910–14. While its potential was seen clearly by Lloyd George, in 1914 it was definitely a 'minor party'.

Note the date given to you: 1914. Your first circle might, therefore, start with an assessment of party strengths in the two 1910 elections, but aim to balance that with a comparison to 1906. That itself needs careful context so you might also make quick reference to 1900 as well. Fortunes could change, and change again, remarkably quickly. Your second circle can take that on to consider 1910–14: the years during which some have diagnosed terminal illness. The party was certainly vigorous in government and had a wealth of talent in its membership. There were divisions, but the Unionists were no less divided then and they did not collapse. By-election results in 1912–14 were not bad. The Liberals looked forward confidently to the general election due in 1915.

(b) Begin with a causal or intentional explanation, and then switch so that both are covered. You may use some material in this question that you used for question **(a)**, but this is a very different question with significantly different focus points (named individuals and time period). To assess decline, one set of circles must focus on the Liberals themselves, but politics is multidimensional so another set of circles should assess them in their external context by reference to their opponents. To address the command 'How significant …?', you must weigh reasons for decline during the post-war coalition government against each other and come to a justified verdict that the Asquith–Lloyd George split was/was not the principal cause.

When considering factors within the Liberal Party your circles of explanation must do more than judge the impact of the feud between these giants. Try not to prejudge the issue by seeing decline as already inevitable in 1918, let alone already under way before 1914. Examine in one circle the impact of total war (not just conscription) on a political group with strongly pacifist and individualist tendencies, but note those same issues divided Labour to a greater extent. Another circle should consider the relative qualities of Asquith and Lloyd George as leaders: were the Liberals better off without 'wait and see' Asquith? For all Lloyd George's brilliance many saw him as a destructive force. The Carlton Club revolt in 1922 was driven by the fear that he was just too 'big' and would shatter the Conservatives as he had already shattered the Liberals. After that, another set of circles must focus on the impact on the Liberals of extending the franchise in 1918, the coupon election and the coalition government.

Your final circle might examine the 1922 election when Labour was ahead of the Liberals by only 119,813 votes. That allows you to consider the structural issue of the British electoral system that rewards parties with geographically concentrated support in individual constituencies (Labour) and makes success far more difficult for parties whose support is more evenly spread across the country (Liberals). For so small a differential in votes, Labour won 142 seats to the Liberals' 115, the system gave Labour 23 per cent and the Liberals 18 per cent of the seats when the former won 30 per cent of the vote to the latter's 29 per cent. The Liberals were being squeezed by Labour but, equally, 'first-past-the-post' was discriminating against both to favour the Unionists (56 per cent of the seats on 38 per cent of the vote). The system could not spark decline but, once under way, it exaggerated the Liberals' state of ill-health and so contributed to their credibility problem – which, in turn, weakened their position yet further.

8 Lloyd George and Post-war Reconstruction 1918–24

POINTS TO CONSIDER

On 11 November 1918 an armistice (or ceasefire) was agreed between the Allied powers and Germany that effectively ended the First World War. British politicians' feelings of relief and elation at this news soon gave way to consideration of the practical issues facing them. The ways in which these issues were handled during this period ensured that the years 1918–24 set in motion forces that would shape and dominate British politics for the rest of the century. These issues will be examined in the following sections:

- The coupon election of 1918
- Domestic reforms 1919–22
- The Conservative revolt and the fall of Lloyd George
- The Conservative 'second eleven' 1922–4

Key dates

1918	November	Armistice declared
	December	General election continues the wartime coalition government headed by Lloyd George
1919		Treaty of Versailles
		Nationalisation of mines is rejected
1920		Unemployment Act
1921		Bonar Law resigns and is succeeded as Conservative leader by Chamberlain
		'Geddes' axe' cuts government spending
1922		Fall of Lloyd George from power
		Chamberlain resigns and Bonar Law becomes prime minister
1923		Baldwin becomes prime minister
		Economic debate over free trade or protection
		Conservatives reunite
1924		First Labour Government takes office in January and lasts until October
	November	Conservatives win massive election victory

1 | The Coupon Election of 1918

Key question
What was the coupon and why was it devised?

Key date
Armistice declared: November 1918

Britain had ended the war in 1918 under a coalition government set up in December 1916 and headed by Lloyd George (see page 146). The coalition contained representatives of the Conservative, Liberal and Labour parties. However, none of the three wholly supported the coalition and to complicate the situation further the divisions within the three parties differed widely:

- Conservative MPs generally supported the coalition with only a minority of dissenters.
- Liberal MPs were more evenly divided between roughly one-third supporting Lloyd George and two-thirds continuing to support Asquith.
- There were less than 40 Labour MPs by the start of the war due to by-election losses after the second 1910 general election. Initially, these almost all supported Lloyd George. However, outside Parliament the situation was different. The powerful **Labour Party National Executive** voted by only 14 to 11 to support the Lloyd George coalition for the duration of the war. The party was in any case deeply divided over the war (see Chapter 5). However as the war went on the party worked hard to repair the split and increasingly distanced itself from Lloyd George. When the war ended official Labour support was withdrawn although a small minority disagreed and left the party as Labour coalitionists.

Key term
Labour Party National Executive A senior group within the party that was elected by members and responsible (in theory at least) for deciding the party's policies.

Lloyd George and his Liberal supporters were understandably anxious to continue the coalition arrangement and, crucially, the majority of Conservatives, including all the main leaders of the party, agreed. However, if Lloyd George was to continue as prime minister he had to be at the head of a credible contingent of Liberal MPs. The 'coupon', which literally means a ticket or voucher entitling the holder to a free service or gift, was devised to try to achieve this. The official Liberal Party organisation was still controlled by Asquith. With no party machine of his own, Lloyd George was compelled to rely on co-operation from the Conservatives to maximise his supporters' chances of getting elected. The Conservatives agreed that a total of 159 coalition candidates, mainly Liberals, would be sent a letter of endorsement signed by both Lloyd George and the Conservative leader, Andrew Bonar Law. The letter would ensure that the candidate would then not be opposed by another Conservative or Liberal candidate as the case might be. This would avoid splitting the vote and allowing an opponent of the coalition to be elected and ensure that more Liberal supporters of Lloyd George would be returned to Parliament than would be possible otherwise. It was this endorsement letter that became popularly known as the 'coupon': a term originally used by Asquith to show his contempt for the arrangement.

Conservative motives

This still leaves the question of why the Conservatives in 1918 were so keen to go along with an arrangement that would leave them sharing power with Lloyd George as prime minister, for possibly another five years, rather than aiming for complete control on their own account. The answer lies in the particular circumstances of the time:

- Lloyd George was now seen by many of the Conservative leaders as a 'genius' who had led the country from near disaster in 1916 to victory: 'the man who won the war'. They genuinely saw him as indispensable. The party leader Bonar Law summed it up thus: '… we must never let the little man go. His way and ours lie side by side in the future … not only in this election but afterwards when all the shouting has died away.'
- Conservative leaders also believed that his public popularity was so great that no other political leader could realistically head a stable government in the uncertain times that were bound to follow such a cataclysmic event as the First World War.
- Their view was reinforced by the impact of the Russian revolution and the emergence of a Communist state that, in theory at least, intended to spread communism globally. Pre-war political tensions and evidence of socialist sentiments in Britain convinced them that Lloyd George's pre-war reputation as a radical reformer was the soundest insurance policy against Communist influence in Britain.

The outcome of the election was a triumph for Lloyd George and the coalition. The results are shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Results of the 1918 election

Pro-coalition			*Anti-coalition*
Conservatives	338		48
Lloyd George Liberals	136	Asquith Liberals	26
Sinn Fein*			73
Coalition Labour	10	Official Labour	59
Irish National Party			7
Independents			9

*Sinn Fein candidates refused to take their seats (see page 124) otherwise as the largest single block of anti-coalitionists they would have formed the official opposition rather than Labour. Source: C.L. Mowatt, *Britain between the Wars*, pages 6–7, 1955.

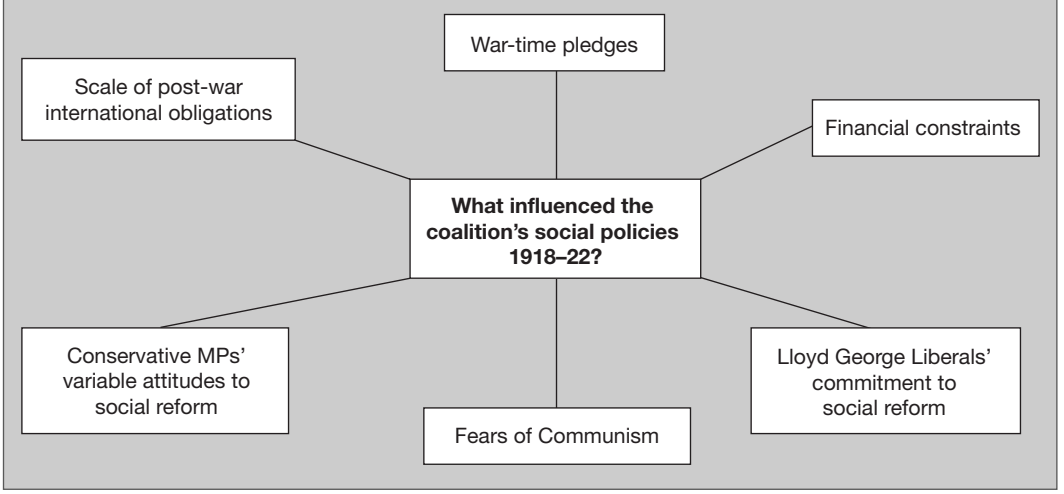
Key date

General election continues the wartime coalition government headed by Lloyd George: December 1918

This was the most democratic election so far in British political history and it set the scene for the development of politics in the inter-war period. The coalition candidates had polled nearly 5.1 million votes overall (57.6 per cent) and had a total of 484 seats dwarfing both the Labour Party and Asquith's official Liberal Party. However, the limited showing of Labour and the virtual annihilation of the Asquith Liberals (Asquith himself lost his seat and, humiliatingly had to have a by-election organised in a safe seat to get him back in), concealed the wider picture.

Labour had polled nearly 2.4 million votes. Even the Asquith Liberals had polled nearly 1.3 million. The first past the post system of election by individual constituency meant (as it has meant ever since), that popular voting strength was not being accurately reflected in terms of seats won. Labour, in particular, would need only to push their share of the vote up a few percentage points to start winning constituencies on a wider basis. By-election successes had pushed their total seats up to 72 by 1922. Equally, without the coupon system the Lloyd George Liberals would be hopelessly vulnerable. For the time being the real winners were the Conservatives who now dominated the coalition and had in effect made Lloyd George and his supporters their 'prisoners'. Only the prime minister's force of will and personality along with his formidable reputation ensured his control and independence for the time being. This coalition would last until Lloyd George's resignation in October 1922.

Summary diagram: The Coupon Election of 1918



Key question
How great were the domestic achievements of the coalition?

2 | Domestic Reforms 1919–22

The Lloyd George government was certainly not short of talent. In addition to the Conservative leaders such as Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain and Lord Curzon, many of the younger talents of the Liberal Party who were admirers of Lloyd George's dynamic radicalism of the pre-war era had followed his star. Any assessment of the government's performance has to be set within its proper context:

- Expectations for a better world (or at least a better Britain) after the traumatising effects of the 'war to end all wars' were high.
- Britain remained a wealthy country, but the government did face financial constraints. The national debt had risen from £650 million in 1914 to over £8000 million in 1919. The

annual interest on this was over £300 million. Over £100 million had to be found annually for war pensions of various kinds, such as widows, children and disabled ex-servicemen. These costs were affordable but they still had to be met and taxation had risen drastically during the war years so that most taxpayers were looking for reductions of the tax burden.

- Although arguably united (at least initially) in its admiration for Lloyd George, the coalition comprised a wide variety of political viewpoints. Conservatives ranged from die-hard Tories to more moderate one-nation Conservatives. The prime minister's Liberal supporters included some left-wing Liberals who were barely distinguishable in ideas from moderates in the Labour Party. Indeed some would actually join Labour in the years ahead as Liberal Party fortunes progressively declined. Agreement on a coherent policy was not always easy to achieve.
- Lloyd George was personally focused on international affairs, which he saw as essential to post-war stability in Europe and the wider world, and in turn perceived as basic to Britain's long-term security and prosperity.
- There is a tendency for some historians, particularly when considering the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to assess domestic achievements purely or at least predominantly in terms of social reform. Given the importance of issues such as the condition of the working classes and the moral need for promoting a fairer society, this is both understandable and to some extent justifiable. However, governmental responsibilities reached further than this and the coalition needs to be evaluated in a wider range of considerations than purely that of social policy, which will nevertheless be the first area for examination.

Lloyd George and social reform 1918–22

The war had seen several bouts of social unrest and even before it had ended Lloyd George was determined to resume the process of social reform that had been started under the pre-war Liberal governments. During the 1918 election campaign he observed 'Revolution I am not afraid of, Bolshevism I am not afraid of, it is reaction I am afraid of.' In other words there was to be no turning back of the clock on government intervention to support social reform and no standing still on reform either. In 1917 he set up a system of Whitley Councils consisting of employer and employee representatives, based on the recommendations of a parliamentary committee headed by the Liberal MP J.H. Whitley. These councils were intended to provide arbitration on disputes over wages and working conditions. Also in 1917 a Ministry of Reconstruction was set up under another Liberal, Christopher Addison, to plan for post-war reform in a whole range of areas: national health, housing (in the 1918 election the government used the campaign slogan 'homes fit for heroes' to underline its commitment), local government reform, banking and industry. A bill to extend pensions was introduced and a new Education Act

Key term

Local Education Authorities Under the 1902 Education Act all county councils and county borough councils were required to set up LEAs to administer the Act (and all subsequent education laws) in their areas of jurisdiction.

was passed in 1918 that required **Local Education Authorities** (LEAs) to produce plans for all stages of education and proposed a minimum school leaving age of 14.

Once the war was over the government had to try to make good on promises and live up to expectations; its performance was mixed. Some of its policies aimed to consolidate or improve on pre-war reforms:

- The Maternity and Child Welfare Act 1918 updated benefits originally introduced in the 1909 budget.
- Old-age pensions were improved in 1919 to remove some of the exclusions and restrictions imposed in 1909.
- Health insurance introduced in 1911 was extended to all people earning up to £250 a year.
- The Industrial Courts Act 1919 set up an arbitration scheme to improve earlier legislation of 1896 and 1908 to help employees gain redress for industrial injuries, etc.

There were also efforts to win working-class support through a series of measures aimed at addressing their immediate concerns:

- Ex-servicemen were allowed special unemployment benefits under a scheme that continued until March 1921.
- During the war rent controls had been introduced and these were continued under a new Act of Parliament in 1920.
- In 1918 the government introduced an Act to prevent wage reductions for a period of six months and then renewed the provisions regularly until September 1920. This was to avoid the kind of wage cuts that usually followed as demand fell following the end of abnormal wartime conditions.
- New reforms were introduced to assist miners, offering a seven-hour day and a Miners Welfare Fund.

In addition there were a number of wider structural reforms to deal with major social issues:

Key date

Unemployment Act: 1920

- The Unemployment Act of 1920 extended the provisions of the 1911 Act to all employees except domestic servants, agricultural workers and civil servants (who had their own scheme). However, doing this at a time of high unemployment led to financial problems. The scheme of 1911 was intended to be self-supporting from the contributions of employers, employees and the government. In 1920 the scheme had a surplus of £22 million but the new provisions quickly wiped this out. In response the government introduced a new Unemployment Insurance Act in 1921 that transferred claimants to a new uninsured scheme after 26 weeks of unemployment rather than simply putting them on to the Poor Law. There was also an Unemployed Dependents Act to give benefits to families.
- Housing was a major issue and had been the subject of the famous 'homes fit for heroes' pledge. New houses were a priority and the Addison Act of 1919 provided government

subsidies to build 70,000 houses a year that would be offered for low rents for a number of years until it was deemed practical to increase them to a more realistic market rate.

Economic concerns

Financial and economic concerns dominated the government's time. The war had set in motion unprecedented levels of expenditure and taxation along with equally unprecedented levels of government interference in the economy. Structurally, however, the impact of the war was not that severe. Hardly any damage at all had been done to mainland Britain. German airships had dropped a limited number of bombs causing minimal damage and a German ship had attempted to shell the coastline from the North Sea. The government had sold a small proportion of its overseas assets to help towards the costs of the war but the bulk of its wealth remained intact. There was general agreement therefore that, as far as possible, the aim should be to restore normal market conditions and get taxation down.

On the other hand the government had to juggle that aim against the heavy burden of commitments it faced internationally in the aftermath of the war. Occupation forces were needed not only in Germany but also in the territories that had formerly been colonies of the defeated powers and had been mandated to Britain in the 1919 peace settlements agreed as a result of the Treaty of Versailles, e.g. in Africa and the Middle East. Initially some taxes such as death duties and profits tax had to go up to balance the books. However by 1922 the government had turned annual deficits into a surplus and income tax could be reduced and the threshold for paying was also raised. Profits tax was ended in 1921.

Key dates

Treaty of Versailles: 1919

'Geddes' axe' cuts government spending: February 1922

This financial recovery required strict control over government spending and in February 1922 a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Eric Geddes, a businessman who had been drafted into the coalition government during the war, recommended cuts in government spending covering the education, health and defence budgets totalling £86 million:

- The army and navy were to be hit hardest with cuts of £20 million and £21 million, respectively.
- Education was scheduled to lose £18 million and the rest would come from social benefits.
- To achieve the cuts massive reductions in army and navy personnel were necessary.
- Teachers' salaries would be reduced.
- Children under six years old would be excluded from school.
- Government contributions to national health insurance were to be limited.
- Police pay was to be cut and the civil service streamlined with the abolition of some ministries such as those of transport and labour.

The government was stunned by these proposals. The political implications in terms of its image with voters were immense. In

the end the government accepted cuts of £64 million as a compromise, with the navy and education coming off best in terms of reduced impact.

Industry and agriculture

The war had forced British industry and the government to face the need for some degree of modernisation and improved efficiency. During the war years there had been no real alternative but for the government to take the lead in imposing solutions to inefficiency in order to win the war. This had led to a situation in which some key sectors of the economy such as the railways and mines had become nationalised in all but name. Agriculture too had been subjected to major intervention over land usage and production. With the end of the war the question was – how far was government intervention to be made permanent and how far were pre-war free market conditions to be restored?

Lloyd George was inclined to be sympathetic the idea of nationalisation for the mines as the mining industry had been struggling with the competition of world markets in the years immediately before the war and some mining operations were notoriously inefficient and under-capitalised. Indeed the Sankey Commission of 1919 that reported on the state of the mining industry offered recommendations that came close to nationalisation. Lloyd George was however heading a government based on majority Conservative support and opposition to the plans led him to accept a compromise in which the mines were returned to their owners while legislation was introduced to try to improve employment conditions. When the mines returned to private ownership in March 1921, falling world coal prices forced the mine owners to look for cost-cutting wage reductions.

Key date
Nationalisation of mines rejected: 1919

There then followed a bitter conflict between the miners and mine owners in which the miners union was supported by the railway workers and transport workers unions: a triple alliance. A general strike was agreed on by the triple alliance but when negotiations finally broke down the alliance broke too and the miners were left to face defeat and wage cuts. The event became known as Black Friday – after the day on which the miners lost their fellow unions' support, Friday 15 April 1921, the day before the general strike in support of the miners was supposed to start. The government was caught between the employers and the miners and eventually gave a £10 million subsidy to help reduce the impact of the cuts but the severity of the crisis facing mines was severe and even with the subsidy wages fell substantially.

There was more intervention in the railways however although it still fell well short of outright nationalisation. The war had shown up starkly the inefficiencies of the railway system and had underlined how central an efficient railway system was to a modern state both economically and militarily. In 1921 a Railways Act reduced the former 120 rail companies to just four. A railway tribunal was set up to control charges.

Agriculture had also shown its worth during the war, dramatically reducing Britain's dangerous dependence on

imported food by massively increasing output. An Act in 1920 set up wages boards and set guaranteed agricultural prices for a period of four years in order to try to protect the sector from the expected downturn when wartime demand ended. However, an unexpected post-war boom then sent wages rising steeply and this was then followed by a slump in which prices for wheat, the staple cereal crop, plummeted. These violent fluctuations convinced the government that it was pointless to attempt such controls and the Act was repealed as early as 1921.

Overall there was no doubting that the preference of the government was for a return to private enterprise. The need for remedial legislation to try to combat what a later generation would call 'the unacceptable face of capitalism' was accepted (this meant in effect the poor social and employment conditions for the working classes arising out of the need to generate profits). The government did not create homes fit for heroes on anything like the scale needed. Nor did it develop the social welfare legislation of the pre-war period into a welfare state of the kind eventually introduced after the Second World War. However, such expectations were arguably way beyond the capacity of a government at that time to implement. Traditional Conservative and even Liberal attitudes did not embrace such ideas. By the end of the Second World War the Liberal Party barely mattered in British politics having been completely supplanted by the Labour Party and the Conservatives had accepted at least in principle many of the ideas of the welfare state. The main aims of the coalition were to maintain stability and to restore some degree of 'normalcy' to everyday life. They had to achieve this within a context that imposed rather more constraints on government in terms of responsibilities than had previously existed. The coalition can certainly not be considered an outstanding success in terms of its domestic policy but it was far from being a failure and moreover it set the tone for continuing reforms and improvements during the inter-war years.

3 | The Conservative Revolt and the Fall of Lloyd George

Key question
Why had the political supremacy of Lloyd George been eroded by 1922?

Lloyd George's record

In 1918 King George V observed that Lloyd George could be 'prime minister for life if he wants to be'. The supremacy of Lloyd George's position in British politics at that time has rarely been equalled and probably never surpassed. For many he was quite simply the 'man who won the war'. However, by 1922 much of that had changed. Although most of the leading figures in the Conservative Party held to the belief that Lloyd George was indispensable to an anti-socialist front, this was being challenged by the party rank and file and by some rising Conservatives with an increasing profile in the party. Even his Liberal supporters were beginning to waver – some inclined to move towards the conservatives, others towards Labour, while some still hankered for reunion with the Asquith liberals.

Key dates

Bonar Law resigns and is succeeded as Conservative leader by Chamberlain: 1921

Fall of Lloyd George from power: 1922

The most immediate cause of Lloyd George's fall is relatively clear. The Conservative Party faced with the decision to maintain or terminate its electoral alliance with Lloyd George, opted for the latter course. The issue had to be faced because a general election would have to be held at the latest by the end of 1923. This raised the question of whether the coalition should continue or whether the parties should fight the elections as separate entities, i.e. a return to normal peacetime political conditions. Lloyd George wanted to carry on as prime minister but this was only possible if the coalition fought the election as a single unit as in 1918. Bonar Law had resigned as the Conservative leader in 1921 due to serious ill-health and had been succeeded by Sir Austen Chamberlain. He and his senior colleague Lord Balfour (the former Conservative prime minister), were in favour of continuing under Lloyd George. Chamberlain agreed to organise a meeting for the 19 October 1922 in which he and Balfour would put the case for continuation with Lloyd George. Since it was known that many Conservative backbenchers had doubts this potentially compromised the position of Chamberlain whose leadership would be untenable if he failed to carry the party with him. Even so Chamberlain seems to have been convinced that he could rally the party around the leadership's desire to go on with the coalition. It was a major miscalculation.

The Carlton Club meeting

At the meeting that was held at the Carlton Club in London, Chamberlain and Balfour advocated the continuation of the coalition and asked for the backbenchers' support. They were countered by a speech from Stanley Baldwin, an increasingly popular and influential figure in the party who argued that the Conservatives must either give up Lloyd George or face being destroyed by him in the same way as he had (according to Baldwin) destroyed the Liberal Party. Accepting that Lloyd George was a 'dynamic force' in politics he argued:

> It is owing to that dynamic force, and that remarkable personality that the Liberal Party, to which he formerly belonged, has been smashed to pieces; and it is my firm conviction that, in time the same thing will happen to our party … if the present association is continued … you will see more breaking up … until the old Conservative Party is smashed to atoms and lost in ruins.

Baldwin was supported in this view by Bonar Law formerly Lloyd George's chief supporter in the party. Temporarily restored to better health Bonar Law had had time during his convalescence to reassess the position and though still unsure up until the very last, he was increasingly inclined to the view that the party must now go it alone or risk a catastrophic split. His support was crucial because he was a credible alternative Prime Minister and Baldwin, as yet, was not. The backbenchers voted by 187 to 87 against continuing the coalition at the next election. Chamberlain and all the leading Conservative ministers resigned, thus in turn

forcing Lloyd George to resign. Bonar Law resumed the party leadership and became Prime Minister and Lord Curzon, who had long resented Lloyd George's interference in foreign affairs, agreed to continue as foreign secretary. Baldwin became chancellor of the exchequer. Apart from these three it was a weak and unconvincing line-up. The king, already disproved in his assessment that Lloyd George could be prime minister for life, now offered the equally inaccurate assessment that he would be prime minister again. In fairness to George V, there were few at the time who disagreed with him.

Key date
Chamberlain resigns and Bonar Law becomes prime minister: 1922

Reasons for Lloyd George's fall

The immediate circumstances of Lloyd George's fall may be straightforward but the concerns that led to the end of the coalition were the result of a number of contributing factors. Some of these reflected the ongoing concerns of Lloyd George's Conservative coalition partners:

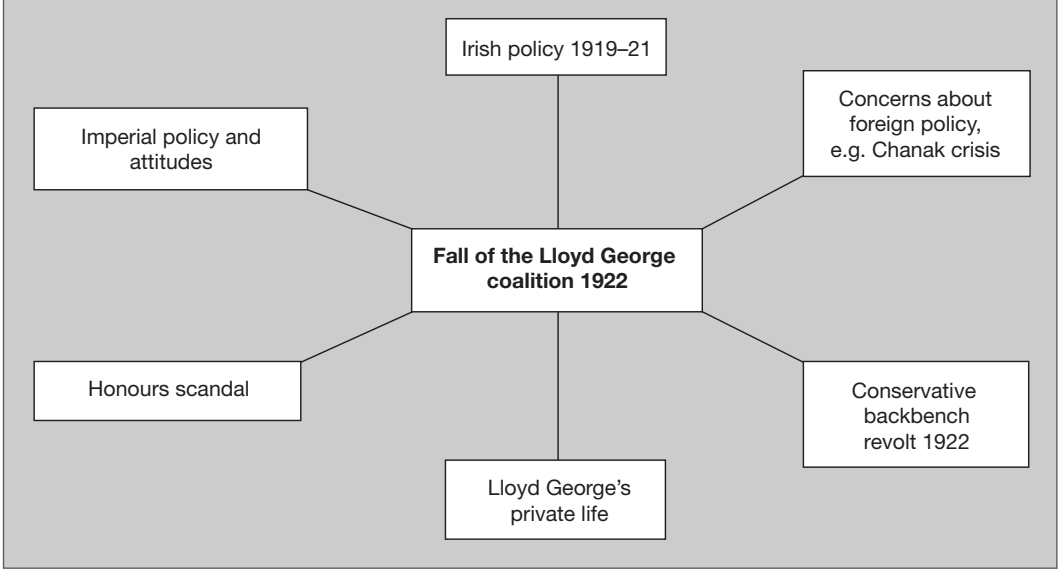
- Many Conservatives were unhappy with Lloyd George's handling of the Irish crisis and the solution to it that he had imposed (see Chapter 6).
- Imperial affairs under the coalition increasingly alienated Conservative backbenchers and rank-and-file Conservative Party members in the country. The virtual recognition of Egyptian independence in 1922 aroused fears about the Suez Canal, which was an important economic route and the strategic key to India. A declaration in 1922 that the interests of Native Africans in Kenya were 'paramount' in questions of settlement did not go down well. Criticism at government level of the actions of General Dyer at Amritsar where 379 Indian demonstrators were shot dead and over 1200 wounded after defying a ban on public demonstrations, was seen by some conservatives as undermining the British administration in the 'Jewel in the Crown'.
- Although Lloyd George was open about his hostility to communism in Russia, he was also against intervention in the Russian civil war and withdrew British troops. In March 1921 an Anglo-Russian Trade Treaty was concluded and this was seen as a softening of the British stand against communism.

There were other concerns:

- Lloyd George's style of government was unfamiliar and provoked criticism. He relied on personal advisors and set up a separate office at Downing Street that became known as the Garden Suburb due to its location in the gardens behind the main building. The influence of this Garden Suburb was resented by ministers and backbenchers alike.
- Lloyd George adopted an almost presidential style of government. He rarely attended Parliament and when he did was increasingly impatient and dismissive.

- While his wife remained at their original home in north Wales, he lived at Downing Street quite openly with his lover, Frances Stevenson, who was 25 years younger than him.
- His attitude to the honours system created a scandal. Lloyd George was totally contemptuous of honours and refused any for himself except the award of Companion of Honour, which was the personal gift of the king and could not therefore be refused. Consequently he saw no reason not to cash in on the pride and snobbery of those who valued honours as social status: £15,000 could buy a basic knighthood; a baronetcy (hereditary knighthood) was available for £25,000; a peerage could be had for £50,000. In fairness the Conservative hierarchy were complicit with this. The proceeds were split evenly between Conservative Party funds and Lloyd George's own political fund with which he intended to make himself independent of the official Liberal Party organisation in the future.
- Lloyd George concentrated his personal attention heavily on foreign policy. He was often out of the country at international conferences. In September 1922, his handling of a Greek–Turkish crisis seemed to bring Britain close to war on the Greek side. The crisis revolved around the advance of Turkish troops on Chanak, a location in the Dardanelles occupied by allied forces. Lloyd George used the threat of force to protect allied control of the area. However, his policy was opposed by both Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon and Stanley Baldwin. The Chanak crisis is seen by most historians as the final straw which provoked the Conservative backbench revolt in October.

Summary diagram: The fall of Lloyd George



4 | The Conservative 'Second Eleven' 1922–4

From Bonar Law to Baldwin

The government led by Bonar Law was one of the weakest in British political history. Apart from the prime minister himself, only Lord Curzon, a former Viceroy of India as well as the serving foreign secretary had real status. Baldwin had joined the cabinet only in March 1921 as president of the board of trade, a relatively junior position. Chamberlain and the other leading figures refused to serve, arguing that ditching Lloyd George was a major mistake. For this reason the government, using the cricketing or football analogy became known derisively as the 'second eleven' indicating that the key players were not part of the line-up. The formation of this government was to have a profound effect on the Conservative Party and the shape of inter-war politics. Although, as will be seen below, the split was repaired within two years of the damage having been done. Baldwin, who might never have become leader of the party at all, succeeded the terminally ill Bonar Law in May 1923; Neville Chamberlain, Sir Austen's younger half-brother, who had only become an MP in 1918 at the age of 49, agreed to join the government only because he hoped that by doing so he would facilitate a healing of the breach. Once in office as postmaster-general, he was quickly promoted to the cabinet as minister of health and subsequently rose to the premiership in 1937 to succeed Baldwin. Without the 1922 crisis it is possible he might never have entered government at all.

Bonar Law's first action as prime minister was to call a general election. This was held on 15 November 1922. He caught the mood of the nation instinctively and conducted a low-key campaign that focused on the need for 'tranquillity and freedom from adventures and commitments both at home and abroad'. The Conservatives duly won by a clear majority of 88. The results are shown in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2: The election results of November 1922

Conservatives	347
Labour	142
Asquith Liberals	60
Lloyd George Liberals	57

Labour had therefore moved clearly into the role of potential alternative government, a position that it would never relinquish in future except on those occasions when they formed the government themselves. That event was closer than anyone imagined at the time. The Liberals were still weakened by the continuing party split. The election had come far too soon for any attempt at reconciliation between Asquith and Lloyd George. However, part of the Liberals' weakened position was the effect of the electoral system. The two factions together polled almost exactly the same popular vote as Labour, but the distribution of

voting strength operated in favour of Labour with its more concentrated votes in particular constituencies.

Just over a year later another general election would bring Labour to the brink of power. In the meantime Bonar Law's days as prime minister were to be cruelly limited. His recovery from ill-health proved only temporary and it emerged that he was in fact suffering from cancer. By May 1923 he was clearly in no condition to continue in office and resigned. He died before the year was out. At the time it was assumed that his obvious successor would be Lord Curzon. By any calculation of seniority, experience and ability, Curzon's claim looked incontestable and he had presided over the cabinet during Bonar Law's frequent absences as he attempted to battle the disease that was killing him. However in the event it was not Curzon but Baldwin who emerged to claim the top job.

Key question
Why did Stanley Baldwin rather than Lord Curzon become prime minister in May 1923?

Key date
Baldwin becomes prime minister: 1923

The emergence of Baldwin 1922–3

There were several reasons why Baldwin rather than Curzon took the premiership in 1923:

- Curzon, although clearly Baldwin's superior in terms of experience and natural brilliance, was nevertheless a difficult colleague, apparently arrogant and superior in attitude. In secret he suffered from a painful and debilitating medical condition and died in 1925.
- Curzon was also a peer and therefore in the House of Lords rather than the Commons. Constitutionally this was no impediment. Salisbury had operated as prime minister from the Lords up to 1902. However, since then the political system had become more democratised and the powers of the House of Lords curbed. In these circumstances some MPs felt it was no longer appropriate for a peer to be prime minister.
- Baldwin had steadily risen in status and as chancellor of the exchequer had taken the lead in negotiating the terms for the repayment of war loans from the USA. His efforts had been received with mixed reviews, but had undoubtedly raised his political profile. Baldwin could also claim to be one of the main architects of the break with Lloyd George.
- Because Curzon was a peer it was Baldwin who had had to take over Bonar Law's leadership role in the House of Commons during the latter's many absences. Therefore, though Curzon had been effectively the deputy for the prime minister in cabinet, it was Baldwin who appeared publicly to be the main understudy.
- Bonar Law refused to offer any official advice to the king as to who he should send for as a replacement. This left the succession open to internal party intrigues. Curzon was so confident that the position was his that he failed to move quickly enough to consolidate his claim. Several leading Conservatives were dubious about Curzon as a leader. In the end Balfour, as a former party leader and prime minister took the initiative and advised that as the Labour opposition had no

representation in the Lords it was essential that the prime minister be based in the House of Commons. The king duly sent for Baldwin and asked him to form the next government.

Baldwin as prime minister

Baldwin's accession to the premiership did not herald any exciting transformation in the government. Curzon, swallowing his not inconsiderable pride agreed to stay on as foreign secretary. Baldwin attempted to win back the Chamberlain and the old guard, but through a combination of his own lack of finesse and the opposition of some of his colleagues, he failed. The only legislation of note was a new housing act, masterminded by Neville Chamberlain, which shifted the focus of house building towards private builders and restricted subsidies for new homes to those built to a miserably small size. Chamberlain's progress as a political force was confirmed in August 1923, when he became chancellor of the exchequer.

In October 1923 Baldwin made a decision that was to have profound consequences. The economic situation was deteriorating and unemployment was on the rise. Baldwin, himself an industrialist, was convinced that the country needed to abandon free trade and go for protection. However, he was bound by a pledge given by Bonar Law during the 1922 election that 'no fundamental change' would be made to the free trade system. In a speech at Plymouth on 25 October Baldwin set out his thoughts:

Key date
Economic debate over free trade or protection: 1923

> Mr Bonar Law's pledge … binds me … and I take those words strictly. … The unemployment problem is the most crucial problem of our country … I cannot fight it without weapons … I have come to the conclusion myself that the only way of fighting this subject is by protecting the home market. I am not a clever man. I know nothing of political tactics, but I will say this: having come to that conclusion myself, I felt the only honest and right thing as the leader of a democratic party was to tell them at the first opportunity I had.

The speech created a sensation and much confusion. Nobody had expected this. There had been no prior debate either in the party or the country, although Baldwin had discussed the issue in the cabinet. It was left unclear as to whether he was intending to call an election on the issue.

Free trade versus protection and the fall of the 'second eleven'

Key question
Why did Baldwin make protection an issue at this point?

A number of factors undoubtedly played a part in Baldwin's decision:

- He was from a wealthy, industrialist family based in the Midlands, the heartland of the Joseph Chamberlain stronghold of protectionism from before the war and was personally a supporter of protection.

- The policy was a clear dividing line between Conservatives and Liberals and by making it an issue he hoped to stop the drift of Austen Chamberlain and his supporters towards Lloyd George and the Liberals and thus reunite the party: this was Baldwin's own subsequent explanation in his memoirs.
- There was a suspicion that Lloyd George, who was nothing if not unpredictable, was himself intending to come out in favour of protection in order to build a new political movement. If (and it is a big if) this were true then it might have proved the end of any hopes of restoring party unity and could even have eroded more support.
- By taking the initiative Baldwin was also attempting to secure his own position as leader.

Key date
Conservatives reunite: 1923

In so far as the plan was to restore party unity it was an outstanding success. Chamberlain responded at once with enthusiastic support for a campaign for his father's dream of protection. There were even attempts to bring Chamberlain and Birkenhead straight back into the cabinet, although these aroused too much opposition from junior ministers for Baldwin to go ahead. However the most important result, and one that Baldwin apparently had not intended, was that Chamberlain urged an immediate general election on the issue and in the circumstances, although many Conservatives doubted the wisdom of the move, Baldwin felt there was no alternative but to go ahead. On 16 November he announced the dissolution of Parliament.

Baldwin's decision may have reunited the Conservatives, but it had exactly the same effect on the Liberals. Whatever his original intentions may have been, Lloyd George proclaimed himself committed to free trade and offered to work with Asquith in a united campaign. Previous attempts at reconciliation in 1923 had come to nothing but the great Liberal talisman of free trade worked its magic and within days of the announcement of the election a joint Liberal manifesto was agreed. The Labour Party also remained committed to free trade.

The election was held on 6 December 1923. The results confirmed the fears of those Conservatives who had seen the election as a mistake. The Conservatives remained the largest party but with only 258 seats instead of 346. They had lost their overall majority. Labour polled only 100,000 more votes than in 1922 but their seats soared from 142 to 191, decisively ahead of the Liberals on 158. The 'hung' Parliament in which no party had an overall majority meant that Baldwin did not resign immediately, but waited to meet Parliament on 8 January 1924. The result was never in any real doubt. The majority of voters in the country had, by voting either Liberal or Labour clearly rejected protection in favour of free trade. Some newspapers demanded a Conservative–Liberal coalition to keep Labour out, but this was hardly realistic given that the two parties had championed entirely different economic policies. In any case, a purely tactical alliance designed only to keep Labour out would only strengthen Labour's image and discredit the other parties.

Asquith made it clear that Labour, as the larger of the two anti-protection parties must take office, and although much criticised for his decision, in reality he had very little choice. On 21 January the government lost a vote of no confidence in the House of Commons by 328 to 256. Baldwin resigned the following day and Ramsay MacDonald was invited by the king to form the first Labour Government. (For coverage of the fortunes of the first Labour Government see Chapter 5.) However, for the Conservatives it proved only a temporary setback. Before the end of 1924 Baldwin had led them in triumph to a massive election victory and the party would remain the single predominating force in British politics until after the Second World War.

Key dates

First Labour Government takes office: January–October 1924

Conservatives win massive election victory: November 1924

Study Guide: AS Questions

In the style of AQA

(a) Explain why the coalition government was continued in the 1918 election. (12 marks)

(b) How successful were the social reforms of the coalition government between 1918 and 1922? (24 marks)

Exam tips

The cross-references are intended to take you straight to the material that will help you to answer the questions.

(a) You will need to explain the motives of both the Conservatives and Liberals in continuing with a coalition government. You will need to mention Lloyd George's personal position and the circumstances that left the Conservatives to accept Lloyd George's leadership after a successful war. Do not forget to include the effect of the Communists' success in Russia as well. You should show how these factors interlink and offer an overall assessment in the conclusion.

(b) You will need to consider the social reforms introduced during this period and balance their strengths against their weaknesses. Success should also be considered in terms of aims and expectations and you are likely to want to argue that the government's record was mixed. Some pre-war measures were extended and some new reforms were introduced (see pages 157–60), but the overall scope of the legislation was nothing like as impressive as that of the pre-war Liberal governments (see pages 45–56). You should try to argue a coherent case and reach a substantiated judgement.

In the style of OCR A

Study the five sources below and then answer **both** sub-questions. It is recommended that you spend two-thirds of your time in answering part **(b)**.

(a) Study Sources A and B. Compare these sources as evidence for the attitudes towards the coalition. (30 marks)

(b) Study all the sources. Use your own knowledge to assess how far the sources support the interpretation that the collapse of the coalition was inevitable by 1922. (70 marks)

Source A

From: Andrew Bonar Law, speaking to Sir Archibald Salvidge, a leading organiser in the Conservative Party, at the time of the announcement of the armistice in November 1918.

I tell you we must never let the little man go. His way and ours lie side by side in the future. I want you to remember what I am saying now and act upon it; not only in this election but afterwards, when all the shouting has died away.

Source B

From: Lord Beaverbrook, who served in the government during 1918 writing in 1963 in The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George*.*

On the first day of January 1921 few people stopped to think on the amazing and unprecedented position of Lloyd George … of the extraordinary political situation. Lloyd George was a prime minister without a party. Of his own group of followers … many were ashamed of their association with the Tories … some waited eagerly and impatiently for honours and places [jobs]. … They were loyal. The rest, almost without exception, hoped for reunion with Asquith. But the weakness of Lloyd George's following was counterbalanced … by the prime minister himself. His name made up the balance of his strength. Then again many Tory members had been persuaded to believe that their own seats depended on the Liberal votes … which had been delivered to them … by the almighty hand of the prime minister.

Source C

From: A. Fenner Brockway, a leading figure in the Labour Party, writing in 1922.

An inevitable result of immoral methods of bestowing titles is that grossly unworthy men are recommended. … Mr. Lloyd George admitted in the House of Commons on 17 July 1922, that some 'mistakes' had been made. Mistakes! Would 'criminal negligence of duty' on the part of the Prime Minister and his advisers be too strong a phrase?

Source D

From: Stanley Baldwin's speech at the Carlton Club, 19 October 1922.

The essence of coalition is voluntary association … and it seems to me that a fatal mistake was made in agreeing to go to an election without consulting the party as to whether they were willing or not to continue the arrangement which they entered into in 1918. … The prime minister … is a dynamic force and it is from that very fact that our troubles … arise. A dynamic force is a very terrible thing; it may crush you, but it is not necessarily right. It is owing to that dynamic force … that the Liberal Party … has been smashed to pieces … in time the same thing will happen to our party. … We have already seen, during our association with him in the last four years, a section of our party hopelessly alienated. I think that if the present association is continued … you will see some more breaking up … the process must go on inevitably … until the old Conservative Party is smashed.

Source E

From: Charles Loch Mowat, Britain between the Wars*, published in 1955.*

At the meeting at the Carlton Club on 19 October 1922, Bonar Law … was received with enthusiasm, in contrast to the cold reception of Austen Chamberlain. Chamberlain argued for continued co-operation against the socialists. … Balfour also spoke in favour of the coalition. There were shouts for Bonar Law. He … made it clear he thought the party should leave the coalition in order to preserve its own unity. This decided the issue … thus ended the coalition.

Exam tips

(a) Source A establishes the attitude of the Tory hierarchy represented by their leader Bonar Law that Lloyd George was indispensable. This, of course, does not mean that the same attitude necessarily applied to the concept of a coalition, it was just that Lloyd George was only available through that means. Source B deals more directly with the attitudes of the rank-and-file backbenchers who were the supporters of the coalition in the House of Commons. The source suggests that their attitude was basically one of self-interest. Some Liberals supported the coalition in the hope of promotion while others were 'ashamed' because it meant working with the Tories. Some Tory MPs had taken the attitude that the coalition protected their seats in Parliament.

(b) Sources A and B essentially show how far the coalition was based on the perceived importance of Lloyd George. There is no suggestion that it was based on anything wider than that and the self-interest that his status encouraged among both Liberal and Tory supporters of the coalition. It follows from this that any

erosion of his image was bound to undermine the coalition and make its continuance questionable.

Source C raises one of the key issues in Lloyd George's fall from grace and you should use you own knowledge to expand on this and other issues. Sources D and E taken together show how far the coalition was dependent on the goodwill of the Tory backbenchers and the extent to which the leadership became divided over the issue. This should lead to a fairly firm verdict that the sources do go a long way towards confirming the inevitability of the break up of the coalition. However, the recognition of Lloyd George's enormous reputation and abilities means that there was always likely to be some doubt about the outcome.

In the style of OCR B

Answer **both** parts of your chosen question.

(a) Why was Lloyd George able to continue as prime minister after 1918?
[Explaining events, attitudes and circumstances.] (25 marks)

(b) How is the overthrow of Lloyd George in 1922 best explained?
[Explaining events, actions and circumstances.] (25 marks)

Exam tips

Revise the General Introduction at the start of the Study Guide to Chapter 2 (page 39).

(a) Initial focus could be empathetic or causal or intentional, and then shift to the other two. Notice the date so do not just consider the coupon election. The big question you need to consider is why a majority of Conservatives and a minority of Liberals wanted the coalition to continue and under the leadership of 'the Welsh Wizard'. And keep that focus tightly on Lloyd George, not the coalition.

There were not enough pro-Lloyd George Liberals to keep him in Downing Street, so many of your circles of explanation will need to be geared to explaining Conservative motives. Your core circles must address the powerful idea of Lloyd George as the genius who had won the war and therefore the man Britain could not do without. One circle should concentrate on the essential fact that the Tory leadership themselves believed this absolutely. An associated, overlapping circle should then look at that idea's twin: the powerful belief the public would reject any leader but Lloyd George. Linked to both ideas was a third: Lloyd George was the only man to keep Britain safe from the Bolshevik threat. Together, these perceptions prevented the Conservatives from mounting a challenge. In 1918–19, the prime minister's position was always safe, and the distortion that Britain's electoral system creates gave him a massive parliamentary majority.

But why did Lloyd George remain in office and the coalition keep going from 1920 to late 1922? Answering that question will give you your remaining circles of explanation. Again, the answer lies with the Tories. They dominated the coalition, yet they were dominated by a Liberal. One circle could home in on his magnetic personality, dynamic energy and administrative genius. To some degree, this prime minister kept himself in position. Another circle could look at the electoral calculations of the parties. The early post-War years were unusual in British politics because there was a genuine three-party politics. The three-way split was unpredictable and Tory managers were far from certain that they could win on their own. Only as the next general election approached were they forced to reconsider.

(b) Begin with a causal or intentional explanation, and then switch. Given the question, you need to build into your circles of explanation an evaluation of the relative importance of the various reasons you consider so you answer directly 'best explained'. This question is not question **(a)** in reverse, you can tell that by simply comparing the very different dates in each question, but it does complete the analysis because its focus is on the collapse of coalition support for Lloyd George.

Your first circle might start with the Liberals since their role can be considered and relegated quickly. The party remained fatally divided and in no position to keep (or put) anyone in Downing Street. The answer(s) must lie elsewhere. Your circles of explanation need, therefore, to focus in on the Conservatives. Set up a pair of circles that you can then contrast with each other, one for the leadership and one for the rest of the party. The Tories too were badly split. The leadership remained committed to more of the same: Lloyd George continuing as prime minister and the next general election being fought with another cross-party coupon. That extraordinary state of mind needs some explanation since the election would take place four or five years after the end of the war. Against that, your next circle should focus on the rest of the Party: why it rebelled against its own leadership (by 2:1) at the Carlton Club. But you have more to do. A final set of circles must go beyond electoral calculations and the personal ambitions of Baldwin and Bonar Law. There were important policy reasons why the Unionists found Lloyd George unsatisfactory: pulling out of the allied war of intervention; the Irish settlement; moves in Egypt, Kenya and India that suggested a weakening of the Empire; the Chanak crisis. On top of that, his 'presidential' style of leadership was seen as undermining his ministers while his sale of honours discredited the government. Finally, do not forget the question. 'How … best explained?' means you must judge the significance of the various explanations and put them in rank order. Mini-conclusions doing this as you work through the essay would be much better than saving all the assessment to the very end.

Glossary

Anglican One who accepts the doctrine of the Anglican Church of England.

Anglican schools Originally called 'National Schools', these schools provided elementary education and were sponsored by the Church of England.

Annexations Territory taken by the winner from the loser.

Autocracy A system where one person has absolute rule.

'Black and Tans' The name given to the paramilitary unit of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

Boers Descendants of the original Dutch-speaking farmers who had first colonised the Cape and who had migrated north to escape the rule of the British. Boer in Dutch means farmer.

Budget deficit Occurs when more is being spent than raised in taxes – a gap that can only be filled by borrowing.

Cabinet The highest level of government, the members of which run the most important government departments.

Capitalist system Economic system based on private ownership of land and resources and driven by the need to make profits.

Class struggle A continuing conflict at every stage of history between those who possessed economic and political power and those who did not, in simple terms the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

Coalition A coming together of different groups or political parties. Many countries are governed by coalition governments, but this is unusual in Britain.

Conscription Compulsory military service.

Conservatism The political principle that the presentation of traditions and existing institutions should be assumed to be the objective of politics.

Constitutional crisis A political crisis where the issues provoking the crisis relate to the rules under which the country is governed.

Corn Laws Laws originally introduced in 1815 to tax cereal products coming into the country in order to protect domestic farmers from foreign competition.

Death duty Taxes levied on the property or money left by a person when they die.

Dail Irish parliament.

Disestablishment The principle of separating the Church of England from its legal connection with the Constitution.

Elementary education Compulsory basic education provided up to the age of 11 or 12 for all children.

Female suffrage The right of women to vote in parliamentary elections.

Fenian Late-nineteenth-century group of Irish Nationalists whose aim was Irish independence. They organised a rising in 1827 and carried out bombings in British cities. They recruited heavily in the USA from Irish immigrants.

Foreign Secretary The Cabinet minister responsible for handling the country's relations with foreign powers and its responses to international events.

Franchise The terms on which individuals hold the right to vote.

Free trade An economic policy in which taxes are not applied (or only minimally applied) to imports and exports and no barriers are imposed on the import or export of goods.

Friendly societies and **Industrial insurance companies** Types of insurance company providing policies at cheap rates to enable to the less well off to provide for funeral, sickness expenses or injuries suffered at work.

Great Reform Act An act that set standard voting qualifications in rural and urban constituencies, increasing numbers of voters from around 450,000 to 700,000.

Great Victorian Boom An expression customarily used to describe the expansion of production in agriculture and industry during the period 1850–70.

Home Rule The principle that Ireland should control its own *internal* affairs within the United Kingdom.

Humanitarian Concern for the human condition and especially for those thought to be unable to protect themselves.

Imperial federation The principle of joining several self-governing territories within the Empire into a union of equals.

Imperial unification Bringing the 'mother' country (Britain) into closer economic and political unity with dominions and colonies.

Imperialist The principle of territorial expansion by a country in order to strengthen its position.

Indemnities Compensation paid by the losers to the winners to cover, partly or in full, their war costs. The term 'reparations' is often used to describe this.

Interventionist social reform Reforms relying on direct action by Government to enforce conditions.

Invisible earnings Earnings from insurance premiums, shipping and brokerage fees, where no actual sale of goods was involved.

Irish Nationalists Those Irish politicians who demanded greater (or even full) independence for Ireland from Great Britain.

Irish Republican Army (IRA) The military wing of the republican movement.

Juvenile court Law courts dealing only with offences committed by children.

Labour exchanges Government offices where the unemployed could be helped to find work.

Labour historians Historians who generally see the rise of the Labour Party as an inevitable (and welcome) process.

Labour movement Principle of organising the working classes so that they can achieve better conditions.

Labour Party National Executive A senior group within the party that was elected by members and responsible (in theory at least) for deciding the party's policies.

Landlordism System of land use where real power resides with those who own the land at the expense of those who actually work on it.

Left-wing historians Historians tending to reach their conslusions based on their political preference for Marxist-Socialist policies.

Liberalism The political idea that personal freedom was the best way to promote the welfare of both individuals and the nation. Gladstone, the Liberal Prime Minister, particularly emphasised that this should also mean minimal interference by the state and minimal taxation. His view has become known as 'Gladstonian Liberalism'. More radical Liberals disagreed and wanted state intervention to help the disadvantaged.

Local Education Authorities Under the 1902 Education Act all county councils and county borough councils were required to set up LEAs to administer the Act (and all subsequent education laws) in their areas of jurisdiction.

Marginal seat Constituency where the MP has only a small majority and there is

a real possibility of its being won by another MP from a different party.

Marxist Followers of the ideas of Karl Marx, who argued that revolution was required in order to overthrow capitalism and create a classless socialist society.

Marxist historians Historians whose interpretations are based on the premise that social class and economic factors are the driving forces of history and that society will ultimately be a classless co-operative one.

Militarism Principle that military power is a desirable end in itself and that its use to achieve objectives is desirable.

Minister of Munitions A completely new government department set up specifically to oversee munitions manufacture. Women were heavily recruited to work in the newly expanded factories.

Municipal boroughs Boroughs with the right to elect their own town councils under an Act of 1835.

Nationalisation The taking over by the government of private companies so that they are owned by the state.

Nonconformist Member of any Protestant Christian Church (i.e. not a Roman Catholic) that did not 'conform' to the teachings of the Anglican Church of England. Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists are examples.

Old Whig Those Liberals who had originally been part of the Whig Party, itself of aristocratic background.

Partition The separation of a single area into two or more distinct areas under separate authority.

Plural voting An individual's right to vote in more than one constituency, e.g. if the place of residence and ownership of business premises were in two different areas.

Poverty line The level of income needed to support the minimum requirements of life in terms of food, accommodation, etc. Obviously this would vary according to family size.

Private Member's Bill All MPs have a right to introduce bills on their own initiative, which, if passed, become law. In the nineteenth century it was very common for even major pieces of legislation to be sponsored in this way by individual MPs rather than the government and sometimes even in defiance of the government. This virtually died out during the twentieth century and the very few Private Member's Bills that are allowed in any session can only succeed with the government's agreement.

Progressive Prepared to introduce reform.

Protective tariffs Taxes on imports to make them more expensive and thus 'protect' domestic produce.

Public health A general term relating to issues such as disease, sanitation, living and working conditions and pollution.

Radical liberalism Liberals who wanted significant changes to the existing social system in order to directly benefit the working classes.

Radicalism Radicalism was a term applied generally to those who believed that the political, social and economic systems of the country needed reform of a very significant degree – changing very basic things such as how poverty was relieved or who should have the right to vote.

Real wages Define the value of goods or services that wages can actually buy. For example, if wages remain the same while food prices increase, their 'real' value has gone down. On the other hand if food prices fall the 'real' value of wages has risen.

Remand home Detention centres where children convicted of offences could be sent to learn and develop rather than being sent to prison.

Republican One who rejects the principle of monarchy in favour of a head of state elected by or appointed from the people of the country.

Resolutions Statements that are voted upon in principle but which, if passed, have no force in law.

Royal Commission Set up to investigate a particular issue and usually to suggest a course of action. Generally composed of a mixture of politicians, interested parties and experts in whatever field under enquiry.

Sanatorium A kind of hospital especially for recovery from long-term debilitating conditions. Emphasis was placed on rest, cleanliness and good ventilation.

'Scorched earth' policy A military tactic in which buildings, crops, livestock, factories, etc., are destroyed in order to deprive the opposition of resources.

Secondary education Further non-compulsory education, usually only undertaken by middle-class or better-off working-class children, which ended at any age up to 18.

Selective breeding programmes The principle of ensuring that only those who are free from disease and hereditary defects are allowed to reproduce.

Separatism Principle of separating Ireland from Great Britain.

Sinking fund A government fund into which money is put for paying off government debts as they become due for repayment.

Social insurance The provision of support to those unable to look after themselves.

Social reform The introduction of new laws to improve social conditions.

Socialism A social and economic system in which private property in all forms is abolished and the means of production and distribution of wealth are owned by the community as a whole.

Socialist The political principle that requires the abolition of private property in favour of public ownership.

Socialist Workers' Republic Political system where government is based on the principle of a socialist state controlled by the working classes.

Stamp duty A tax paid to the government for legalising official or legal documents, e.g. on the sale of property.

State pension Money paid to people over a certain age out of state funds.

Total War Where all the resources of a country – human, industrial and commercial – are mobilised to serve the war effort.

Trade gap Where the value of items imported into the country exceed the value of exports.

Unionism Unionists were those who argued that the Union between Great Britain and Ireland must be kept at all costs and that any measure of Home Rule for Ireland was bound to lead to separation in the long run.

Veto The right to reject a bill completely.

West Britonism The idea that Ireland had no real separate identity but was merely a geographical area of Britain.

Whips MPs who within their own political party, ensure that the other MPs vote according to the wishes of the party leadership. If the party is in government, the whips are paid members of the government.

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