

'There were more similarities than differences between the Conservative and Labour policies in the period 1964-1979'.

How far do you agree?



The period 1964-1979 saw an end of the post-war boom and all three Prime Ministers had tough terms at Number 10. Wilson, Heath and Callaghan failed to end the 'stop go' cycle of the economy and this period saw rising prices and inflation, unemployment reaching (and going over) one million, and stagflation with production declining. Moreover, government faced monumental debts at various times: Wilson inherited £400 million in 1964 and Callaghan borrowed £3 billion in 1978 from the IMF. Such economic woes meant that both Heath and the Labour Prime Ministers experienced strikes and industrial action on a huge scale. The age of affluence and post-war boom had ended. Both parties also saw the end of the two-party system and rising influence of Liberals and Nationalists. Both parties attempted to create ties with Liberals to secure their political positions.

As they had similar problems they attempted similar solutions and neither party moved away from the 'post-war consensus' and Keynesian economic policy of intervention. Though in some ways they had different approaches they largely fell back on economic policies that had their roots in the 1930s and 1940s. Though Heath considered it a more monetarist approach, he quickly made a famous 'U-turn' and bailed out Rolls Royce and the Clyde Shipping Company. The 1973 OPEC oil crisis meant that his intervention in the economy was unavoidable. It would only be under Thatcher that a genuinely new approach was adopted that was more laissez-faire and monetarist.

Card Sort

Sort the cards into three categories: **Economic**, **Social** and **Political**. Then decide whether they reveal a similarity or a difference between Labour and Conservative policies.

A

Wilson had a classless image, was warm and personable, far removed from the 'Grouse Moor' image of the Conservatives. However, particularly in his second term from 1974, Heath seemed more interested in self-preservation and avoidance of conflict.

B

Heath was stiff in his manner and uncompromising and relatively cold and short with the press. Unlike Wilson he was not a plotter or a schemer. However, he too was from a grammar school background and some argue it was the two men's similarities that meant they could not get along!

C

Focus was on Britain catching up with the 'White Heat' of technological change. Wilson created new departments (Department of Technology and a Department for Education and Science). Many scientists became government advisors.

D

Wilson's government set up quotas on immigration (Commonwealth Immigrations Act, 1968) but also set up the Race Relations Board to attempt to improve racial harmony in the UK after so much immigration in the 60s. Heath did the same and was not a racist. He sacked Enoch Powell after the 'Rivers of blood' speech and did not let him campaign for the Conservatives.

E

Wilson did attempt to join the EEC but was lukewarm about this as many in his party feared the competition it would bring British business. The application was rejected thanks to Charles De Gaulle. Wilson was against EEC membership when Heath joined in 1972. Wilson then allowed an EEC referendum in 1974 (mostly to avoid a Labour split). Heath was very keen for EEC membership as he knew that Britain was weakening and would benefit from better trade with Europe. He managed to secure entry by gaining the support of 69 rebel MPs from Labour. With De Gaulle gone, he could now ensure Britain's entry into the EEC.

F

Heath attempted to introduce a more 'monetarist' approach to the economy, encouraged by Sir Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher and these proposals were formalised at the Selsden Park Conference of 1970. Heath then performed a famous U-turn and bailed out Rolls Royce and the Clyde Ship Building Company (Rolls Royce was nationalised). However, Heath was an emphatic supporter of the 'post-war consensus' and Selsden Park would not have been a complete rejection of Keynesian economic policies.

Similarities and differences between the Conservative and Labour policies 1964-1979

<p>G</p> <p>A more liberal attitude to social concerns was promoted by Labour as laws banning homosexuality were erased, capital punishment was ended in 1965, and a new Race Relations Act was passed.</p>	<p>H</p> <p>Heath spent public money on investment in business and giving subsidies - this helped reduce unemployment from one million to 500,000.</p>	<p>I</p> <p>Education received new funding and focus from Labour and seven new universities were opened (e.g. Warwick, Sussex and York) as well as the Open University.</p>
<p>J</p> <p>Wilson had a close set of advisors, his 'Kitchen Cabinet' and was criticised for this as he did not use his ministers enough.</p>	<p>K</p> <p>Jenkins, working for Wilson, raised taxes and cut public spending. Barber (Heath's Chancellor) introduced tax cuts and cuts in public spending. This led to the 'Barber Boom': rise in wage inflation.</p>	<p>L</p> <p>Heath attempted a deal with the Liberals but this failed. Callaghan did the same and developed the Lib Lab pact in 1977.</p>
<p>M</p> <p>Wilson wanted positive relations with trade unions (invites to Number 10 for beer and sandwiches) but he faced wildcat strikes. Barbara Castle's strong proposals to limit Trade Union power were shelved after Wilson realised the TUC, NUM and the Labour left did not like the ideas. When he came to power again in 1974 he immediately ended Heath's Industrial Relations Act and gave in to the unions.</p>	<p>N</p> <p>The DEA and George Brown had attempted Devaluation but this failed and Jenkins eventually instituted Deflation and a prices and incomes policy. This led to improved balance of payments and a surplus. Heath built on the prices and incomes policy of Jenkins and tried to impose limits on wage increases.</p>	<p>O</p> <p>Heath took on the trade unions in the way that Barbara Castle's White Paper ('In Place of Strife') had proposed. The new Industrial Relations Act of 1971 created a cooling-off period and strike ballots. It failed as the miners and TUC dug in their heels and refused to budge. Due to lack of coal and electricity this led to three-day week and contributed to Heath's fall from power.</p>

Create a table to compare the Conservative and Labour governments' policies and approaches.

	Similarities	Differences
Economic		
Social (including industrial action/strikes)		
Political		

Similarities and differences between the Conservative and Labour policies 1964-1979

Teacher answers:

	Similarities	Differences
Economic	F, N	E, K
Social (including industrial action/strikes)	D	C, G, M, I, O
Political	L	A, B, J

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