

How successful was the heath government of 1970-74 assignment



However, the Heath Government is widely considered to be a failure, there are many factors of the failure of the heath government, whether it be is failure in dealing with the trade unions, the devastating actions of Bloody Sunday or perhaps it was Heaths incredible bad luck during his time in power. Heath's government suffered an early blow with the sudden death of Chancellor of the Exchequer Iain MacLeod on 20 July 1970. MacLeod would have proved very useful to Heath, as he could have done with Manacle's economic nouns.

Another disaster to fall on Ted Heath's government was the happening of Bloody Sunday in which the British Army interrupted an Irish Civil Rights march and 13 Irish citizens were killed as a result of gunfire. The lack of intervention to prevent this from the government meant that the finger was pointed at Ted Heath, as he was an obvious target for the blame. However, one would argue that the biggest failure of the Heath government was the problems with the Trade Unions.

The unions had already caused many problems for Harold Wilson and they became even more militant when Heath came to power, the problems with the unions continued during the Callaghan government. It is said that an incredible seven million working days were lost due to the union strikes. The worst of the strikes came in 1972 when the Arthur Scarring led the cantonal Union of Miners to strike after they demanded a 45 per cent increase in wages. The strike led too lack of coal and without the coal the country was quickly running out of electricity and fuel.

However, Heath refused to lose, instead he introduced severe limits on electricity and use of fuel. This led to Heath announcing in December 1973 that industrial and commercial businesses would be limited to the use of electricity to three days a week. This affected the people of Britain greatly - TV stopped at 10.30, there were regular blackouts, people were even advised to do their teeth in the dark and share baths. It is easy to say the people were angry with not only the government but also the unions. The three-day week did nothing but harm the Heath government.

Heath eventually gave in to the unions by settling the dispute and giving them a 21 per cent increase in their wages, a figure nearly 3 times the amount originally offered by the employers. This did not stop the unions as they went on strike again in 1974, Heath deciding he had had enough called an election asking the country a simple question: Who governs? The government or the Unions? The people of Britain spoke and the answer he got was a 'Not you'. Ted Heath's failure to top teen Nylons meant that people lost all their faith in the government.

Nine Nylons had ruined many governments and Ted Heath's was no different. The economy was another factor that added to the unsuccessful Heath government, which was handed down to him by the previous Labor government. In the run up to the 1970 election, Heath took his shadow cabinet on an 'away day' to a hotel in Sheldon. It was decided at this meeting that to tackle the economy the party would have to be hard on the Unions and stop bailing out failing companies and industries. However, once in government Heath stuck to none of his previous promises, which is one reason why his government was considered a failure.

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On the other hand, it could be argued that a government cannot always stick to their policies due to changing circumstances and the Unions were determined in their demands which left Heath with no option but to submit to the Unions demands or the country would have completely stopped running. To make things worse for Heath, in 1972 it was revealed that unemployment had reached one million for the first time in history. This was seen to be a huge catastrophe and because of the increasing numbers of unemployment it was decided that the economy would be inflated in an attempt to ring unemployment down, the so-called " Barber Boom".

Heaths government did come with one rather large success as in January 1972 he took Britain into the SEC. This was considered to be one of his greatest achievements during his time in power. Nevertheless, Britain finally being allowed into the SEC was mainly down to the fact De Gaulle was no longer the French president, so perhaps Heath can't really claim it a victory for him. Joining the SEC was good as it allowed access to European markets and it entitled regions to European grants and allowed British citizens to live in the ELI.

This did not come without its costs however; it meant that Britain was no longer allowed to import cheap food from the common wealth. In conclusion, Ted Heath's government was a complete failure. Whether or not it was down to bad luck or just bad leadership from Heath in general. Heath failed to stop the Unions who were pulling Britain apart from the inside and he failed to deal with the economic situation that confronted his government. It cannot be said that his success in joining the SEC, which was only really due to De Gazelle's departure, can make up for any of these colossal failures.

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