

To reason that lost
the tories essay



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It is clear that there were a number of reasons that caused the Tories to lose the 1906 election. One reason was the tariff reform act but there were many others such as the Boer war which went on from 1899 to 1902. The Boer War took place in South Africa under the command of the then Prime Minister Lord Salisbury and was mainly started to gain access to South Africa's cheap raw materials, especially gold and to add another colony to the empire as the conservatives who were in control were all for the British empire and very patriotic.

Before the War England was in control of Cape Colony in South Africa which was below the two Boer colonies (Rhodesia and the Orange Free State) and was also in control of Zimbabwe which was above the two. These two colonies were once controlled by the Dutch but they had pulled out and given the two colonies independence. This was even more of a reason for England to take over as now the colonies were independent the Dutch would not come to their aid. The take over was expected to be quick and fast and take no longer than 5 months seeing as the colonies were made up of villages and farmers against the might of the British army.

The war did not go to plan and these so-called farmers put up a strong fight by using guerrilla warfare. A war that was expected to last 5 months ended up lasting 3 years and along with it came a huge loss of life with around 20,000 British soldiers dying. This news was not taken well back in England and the war was classed as a huge disaster. Also the way in which the war was won was treated with disgust too.

With desperation setting in, in order to stomp out this guerrilla warfare Lord Kitchener burned down villages and put all Boers in prison camps. The conditions in these camps were awful and many people caught diseases such as cholera and typhoid and many died of malnutrition. This news got back to England and many voters were angered in the way at which the Boers were being treated. What made the war even worse for the conservatives was that there was far less gold in the Boer mines than they had thought. The war had cost around ? 250, 000, 000 and there was no where near that amount of gold to repay back the money spent on the war.

The failures of the Boer war then led on to the national efficiency debate (another important factor) Concern about poverty in Britain and anxiety that Britain was in decline as a World power led to the idea that Britain had to improve its efficiency by taking steps to improve the quality of the workforce. The main reason that brought about the debate was the because of the difficulty of finding fit young men to fight in the Boer war. For example in Manchester out of the 11, 000 men that volunteered for the war, 8000 were rejected due to failing the medical. The Boer war left many in Britain with doubts about the quality of the working class and about their ability to carry out tasks at work and in battle. This also led onto a research by Seebohm Rowntree and Charles Booth which revealed that poverty was even more widespread than thought with 30 % of England being in poverty and 10% being in chronic poverty.

With the majority of the working class in such poor condition, and this is shown by the fact that Germany and the USA has overtaken Britain's economy it brought worries of what would happen if England went to war.

And with the threat of Germany who had the biggest army in the world it was now a major worry. But even with these huge worries with the working class and their poor health Arthur Balfour still did nothing and stuck with the idea of Laissez faire and ignored the problem. Another issue to come from the Boer war was the Chinese slave issue.

After the Boer war a severe labour shortage arose and to combat this the British government high commissioner agreed to allow mine workers to import 50, 000 Chinese workers on low wages. These Chinese workers who the liberals referred to as 'slaves', were poorly treated and lived in horrible conditions. The Chinese slaves caused outrage in Britain for 2 reasons. First was the humanitarian concern and how they were treated with many of the Chinese dying of starvation. And secondly and most importantly was the fear that the practise of importing cheap slaves may extend on to Britain and people's jobs would be taken. This was a big mistake because the conservatives had now become unpopular in many peoples books.

Another way in which the conservatives upset the working class by refusing to reverse the 'Taff Vale' case decision. This was said to have been a factor into contributing to the start of the 'lib-lab-pact' by the Liberals. It also encouraged trade unionists to vote liberal rather than conservative. A major voting group at the time were the Protestant non conformists who until 1900 the majority of were supportive of the Liberals. The protestant non conformists who consisted of various religious groups such as protestants, Methodists, Jehovah's witnesses and Mormons then swapped to Tory after the Liberals tried to introduce the Home rule for Ireland act and the Liberals then lost the next election putting the Tories n power. Then in 1902 the

conservatives also foolishly upset the key voting group by introducing the Education Act.

Before the education act of 1902 there were two types of school, voluntary schools (church schools) and board schools (schools run by an elected school board) Board schools were only required to teach basic religious lessons so non conformists preferred to send their children there. Church schools would provide Anglican and catholic religious lessons so Catholics would send their children to church schools. The board schools were funded by local rates while the voluntary schools were funded by Catholic Church. But after the 1902 Education Act voluntary schools (church schools) could be funded by the rates and it also abolishes school boards. Protestants now have to pay higher taxes for to fund schools that their children do not go to.

The protestant non conformists are outraged and choose to switch back to voting Liberal. Many put the entire blame on Arthur Balfour for this act as he was fully supportive and a strong follower of the Church of England. The education also helped strengthen and unite the liberal party and caused the faith of the public to sway to their side. Another act made by the Tories which upsets the protestant non conformists in particular the Methodists is the 1904 licensing act. During the time of conservative rule the level of alcoholism was high and there were a vast number of pubs in every town.

And as some authorities were run by Methodists who believed that that drinking and gambling were wrong pubs were beginning to be shut down. This left pub owners poor, often on the street and with no income or business. So the government introduced the licensing act which

compensated the publicans and brewers if their pub is closed down. The compensation would come from a fund that brewers and publicans would pay into and the government would run it. The Methodists were strongly against this act as they said that the government was helping and compensating sinners and it gave non conformists ever more reasons to vote liberal and to turn their backs on the conservatives. Then there is the Tariff reform issue which was started by Joseph Chamberlain who was encouraged to do so by the Boer war and felt that cheap foreign imports were unfair and ruining Britain's economy.

The idea from Chamberlain was to do what many countries such as Italy, Germany and France had already done and put tariffs (taxes) on foreign goods (protectionism). In Britain's case it would be taxes on goods coming from outside of the empire. Tariff reform also had domestic objectives, for Chamberlain felt that finances could be generated from tariffs for a scheme of old-age pensions and other social improvements. Such a programme would help Chamberlain secure the Unionist's hold on the West Midlands, and enhance Chamberlain's power inside the government still further.

Chamberlain also wanted to put taxes on food which no resident wanted as it would no effect the poor but also the rich. Chamberlain gave a speech on tariff reform in 1903 which is referred to as 'The radical bombshell' the tariff reform issue was a very heated debate and split the conservative party in two with half for it and half against which was a major blow as the public now viewed the conservatives as weak .

The majority of the public also wanted to stick with free trade rather than go with protectionism as with free trade came more goods, variety, cheaper

goods and it opened up countries to British products and increased the exportation of goods, also putting tariffs on foreign goods would have heavily affected the middle class and the rich as foreign countries would have retaliated and put taxes on British goods and seeing as the rich and middle class owned the factories that made these products it would have been a big blow. After time though Prime Minister Arthur Balfour decided to introduce some tariffs but not on food, this would happen in a few years. By Balfour doing this he upset both sides of the conservative party. Arthur Balfour was also later in control thinking of introducing a poll tax. Another factor that contributed to the conservative's demise was the ever increasing appeal of the liberal party.

They promised that if they were re-elected they would stay away from an Irish parliament which encouraged the protestant non conformists to vote liberal who were a key voting group and being all for free trade would also not introduce a tariff reform. They also believed in keeping food prices low and some liberals favored the working class. Also the appointment of Arthur Balfour as prime minister was a turning point. Balfour made a series of mistakes which alienated voters from the unionist alliance and strengthened the Liberal party. All of these factors that I have talked about played a role in the Conservatives losing the 1906 election but I believe that the tariff reform issue and talks of taxes on food combined together played the biggest role in the conservatives losing the 1906 election.

For the Boer war, Chinese slave issue and efficiency debate yes people were affected by it and a few voters may have switched to liberal but it didn't cause a major swing of voters as it was really only the first mistake the

Tories had made. The working class issue with the taff vale case was not as it only angered the working class who at the time couldn't even vote in elections. With the education and licensing act came a big shift in voters and I believe it is the second biggest factor in contributing to the loss of the election for the Tories but not the biggest as it only swung protestants and non conformists over to vote liberal but not everyone. I believe that the tariff reform issue and tax talks were the biggest factors as it affected everyone. The poor, middle class and rich would have all been affected by tax on food and the middle class and rich would have mostly been affected if tariffs had been introduced as they were the ones who owned the factories and made the products and countries would have retaliated and put taxes on their British made goods.

These two issues caused a huge vote swing back to the ever popular liberals and added that the tariff reform totally split up the Tory party and signified to the public how divided they were. And a divided party is a losing party which the Tories learned when the 1906 election took place and they lost by a landslide victory to the liberals.