

Why did the liberals  
win a landslide  
election in 1906  
essay



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There were many reasons why the Liberals managed a landslide election in 1906.

The success of the Liberals and the failure of the Conservatives all of which contributed to the election were one which was a landslide. The Liberals in the 1906 election got 399 seats whereas the closest opposition which was the conservatives gained 196 seats. The Unionists had been in control since 1886, which was a long while, and Lord Salisbury was getting old and becoming unable because of his health, he resigned in 1902 and Balfour was his replacement. Balfour was not as good of a leader, he lacked political skill to keep the Unionist coalition; he was very indecisive.

He was also an aristocrat and therefore did not relate well with the masses, which brought the Unionists little support and helped the Liberals to gain popularity. This is another reason why the Unionists contributed to the Liberal victory of 1906. There were three miscalculations which were made by Balfour which led to the decline of the Unionists and the triumph of the Liberals. The education act which was passed by Balfour united the Liberals. After the bill was passed the liberal unionists said that the coalition between them and the conservatives could not afford to strain too far and the loyalties of a powerful group.

Another miscalculation involved the letter which Balfour wrote to Chamberlain on the 18th February 1905. In this letter Balfour implied that Chamberlain rather than Balfour, was responsible for the unpopularity of the government after May 1903. In the letter he mentioned that he believed the

public would not be prepared to stand for food taxes. This could be seen to have added to the Unionist unpopularity and the Liberals rise.

It could be seen that as Balfour was priminister he could have prevented the policy from going through and being potentially damaging. Tariff Reform could also be seen as a major reason why the Liberals managed to gain a landslide victory in 1906. By the time of the 1904 general election the Boer War had been over for two years but four years earlier in the 1900 general elections the conservative government claimed it was very close to success. They used this lie to help them win the election in a similar way Margaret Thatcher used the victory in the Falklands to help her win the 1982 General election. The public where very angry that the war had continued for another two years and many English lives had been lost in a war they had been told was almost over. The second reason for unpopularity was the Taff Vale case in 1901.

The Taff Vale Railway because of an organised strike took the Amalgament Society of Railway Servants to court in 1900. The union lost and was forced to pay damages of £23, 000. This had much wider implication as it meant no Union could strike without being worried that they would be sued. This left the government who failed to overturn this verdict very unpopular with workers and trade unions. The third cause of Tory unpopularity was due to Chinese slavery. After the British victory in the Boar wars attention went to the mines in South Africa but as the was a Labour shortage the government choose to use Chinese Coolies.

The first reason for why the public disliked this was the conditions the slaves were kept in, people dislike the concentration camp mentality and worried that the slaves would get involved in 'nameless practices' because they were so cramped together. The second and more important reason people were scared that they could lose their job to a slave, once again it was the workers that the government seemed to be angering. The fourth cause of the Tories' unpopularity was the 1902 Education Act. The main point of the act, which angered people, was the fact that education was to expand through Church schools, which would be funded by rates. But nonconformists did not like Church schools and were hoping that they would just disappear.

Many nonconformists refused to pay the rates. In 1903 a secret electoral pact was created between the Liberals and the LRC. The LRC agreed not to put candidates against Liberal candidates. This meant that the anti-Unionist would not be split and that the Liberal Party would have access to £100,000 pounds of the LRC electoral funds which was much needed at the time as funds were running short in the Liberal Party. This was useful to the Liberal Party and was likely to provide them with political domination in a time when they needed it most.

In conclusion you can see that there were various reasons why the Liberals managed to gain a landslide victory in 1906. The Unionist failure by the use of political trickery which leads the public to lose confidence and not trust the government also due to risky politics you could see it was time for a change (people get bored with governments and look for a change). These are not the main reasons why the government would have been expecting defeat, the separation into two groups left the party with no real policies. | <https://assignbuster.com/why-did-the-liberals-win-a-landslide-election-in-1906-essay/>

believe that it wasn't necessarily the clever tactics and ruling of the Liberals which led to them being in power it was that they were able to replace an unpopular government . Conservative mistakes such as losing most of the working class votes and situations which lead to there humiliating defeat and not a Liberal landslide.