

Administration



Why was Pitt's 1784 administration not expected to last; and why did it succeed against the odds? There were many factors that threatened William Pitt politically. In 1784, however, equally, there were just as many factors that assisted in securing Pitt's position as Prime Minister. Firstly, Pitt, at the age of 24, had become Great Britain's youngest Prime Minister ever, and consequently was mocked for his youth. A popular rhyme circulated that it was "a sight to make all nations stand and stare: a kingdom trusted to a schoolboy's care."

As a result Pitt was not always taken seriously as many believed him too young and therefore inexperienced in the world of politics. Moreover, Pitt had made himself enemies from the very start due to the deceitful way in which he had come to power. He lacked support in the House of Commons as many were supporters of his rival Fox- whom he had caused the downfall of in preventing the passing of the East India Company Bill. Which meant that it was unlikely for Pitt to be able to gain any respect from his fellow colleagues and did not stand him in good stead for the start of his career as Prime Minister.

However, Pitt had been brought up by a former Prime Minister, his father, William Pitt the elder. From a young age Pitt had been given public speaking lessons and had been taught how to be an astute politician. He used what he had learnt from a young age to win over the public, and was known widely for his speeches and honesty; such as his 'maiden speech' or 'The Arming of the Nation'. In addition, he was seen as a refreshing change from the corruption widely associated with his predecessors: Fox and North.

It was Pitt's skills as a politician that died him to win over the support of the people- these were qualities that would aid him in his battle to stay in power. Unfortunately, Pitt came into power just after Great Britain's embarrassing defeat in the War of American Independence. This meant that the public would have been lacking faith in their government, and that the country would have been in a state of instability and humiliation too, so Pitt had a lot to step up to. Nevertheless, Pitt shone through, and intelligently passed bills to re-gain Great Britain's stability.

Examples of these are the India Act of 1784 (which established dual gingly trafficked goods. Again, proving Pitt to be an astute politician. Additionally, the King's support undoubtedly had a large part to play in guaranteeing Pitt's administration. On one hand, this could have made Pitt seem like a fool doing the King's work- as if he had merely been 'lucky that the King had needed someone to oppose Fox, and otherwise would not have been appointed Prime Minister. This would have made Pitt unpopular, and again, ineffective as Prime Minister.

On the other hand, I would argue that the King's backing of Pitt assured his position as Prime Minister more than any other factor as the King's undivided support overruled any other. George III's support was shown particularly strongly in 1773, when he threatened to abdicate the Throne if Pitt resigned; this proves the King's total support of Pitt, and shows that he would really do anything to ensure that Fox, whom we would now call a republican, could not come back into power. Furthermore, the King's executive role, control of patronage and appointing ministers, secured Pitt a comfortable majority in the House of Commons.

For example in a mineral election in 1784, Pit defeated 160 of Fox's supporters in Parliament. In my opinion, I believe that bribes and patronage from the King would have had a large part in swaying the results in this election; particularly due to the previous lack of support for Pit in the House of Commons only a year before. Many believe that Pit was merely a 'lucky beneficiary of circumstance'. Initially yes, Pit may have been in the right place at the right time, however it was not 'luck that kept Pit in power for twenty years.

Despite Pit's rivals in Parliament, such as Fox and his supporters, Pit managed to win over the public and eventually, Parliament with his speeches and astute skills as a politician. As well as this, Pit had the never wavering support on King George III, which as close to guaranteed him his place in Parliament in the first place. To conclude, I believe that the factors that put Pit's position as Prime Minister in doubt were nothing in comparison to William Pitt's astute skills as a politician and the undying and almighty support of King George III, and therefore that is why I believe that Pitt's administration lasted in 1784.