

The 1945 Campaign

The election took place soon after the end of fighting in Europe. It has been argued that the nation had undergone the horrors of war and now expected to enjoy the fruits of victory.

Labour Party Policies and campaign



The Labour manifesto, *Let us Face the Future Together*, promised to implement the Beveridge Report. This report, published in December 1942, recommended a comprehensive Welfare State. This was to include comprehensive Social Security and a National Health Service. Labour also promised to nationalise major industries and invest into building houses.

Importantly, the status of the Labour Party had changed dramatically during the war. Churchill led a National Government and had given many key ministries to Labour MPs. This gave Labour a wealth of experience in office which they could build upon in the election.

The Conservative campaign



Winston Churchill had been an incredibly popular and successful war leader. Few could imagine that the electorate would turn against him. Although the Conservatives appeared to be in a very strong position as they entered the election campaign, to many voters they remained the party who had tried to appease Hitler, created mass unemployment and brought in the Means Test.

The Conservatives' appealed to the nation under the slogan "Vote National - Help him finish the job". This was based around Churchill's personal popularity.

Although the proposals in the Beveridge Report were widely supported throughout the country, the Report received only lukewarm support from Churchill and his Party. Churchill based much of the campaign on the dangers posed to democratic institutions by Labour's proposals for a Welfare State and the nationalisation of key industries.

The Result



The result was announced on 26 July 1945 and it took everybody by surprise.

Labour took 48% of the vote and gained a Parliamentary majority of 146 seats. This was the largest majority ever in British history. In Plymouth the results were as follows:

Constituency	MP	Party
Plymouth Devonport	Michael Foot	Labour
Plymouth Drake	Hubert Medland	Labour
Plymouth Sutton	Lucy Middleton	Labour

Content created by Tony Rea and From the Grassroots team (2014).

Image Credits (starting from top down)

“Poster for General Election 1945.” By Andy Read, date taken – Jan 2012. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share 2.0 - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/andyread2012/>
 Winston Churchill at his seat in the Cabinet Room at No 10 Downing Street, London. © IWM (MH26392)
 Announcement of Plymouth 1945 General Election results outside City Museum. © Plymouth Arts and Heritage Service (1418/2285)