1973: the year starts with brief economic recovery and ends in an ECONOMIC & POLITICAL CATASTROPHE

- Unemployment dropped to 500,000, working days lost to strike halved
- BUT October 1973: Yom Kippur War --> OPEC OIL CRISIS = price of oil quadrupled
- November: NUM demands another wage increase.

1974: the year of two elections

- A national THREE-DAY WEEK imposed on all industry and business to conserve energy during miner's strike and oil crisis.
- Wilson, back in power, abolished the Industrial Relations Act, communicating to the unions that Labour was not looking for confrontation.


1977/78: THE WINTER OF DISCONTENT

⇒ Train drivers, lorry drivers, hospital porters, grave diggers, dustbin-men all on strike

1979: monetarism makes its first appearance

- Geoffrey Howe's first budget: income tax reduced from 33% to 30%, top rate from 83% to 60% (later to 40%), VAT increased considerably.
- privatisation of BP

1980:

- The implications of monetarism weren't positive. Inflation running at 15%, unemployment at 2 million.
- The Housing Act/Right to Buy: between 1980-88, 2 million council houses were sold into private ownership.

1981: monetarist policies enforced with more rigour.

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§§ The economic impact this wave of industrial action had did not compare to that of the 1972 and 4 strikes. However the psychological impact must not be underestimated. Rubbish piled up in Trafalgar Square.

*** Unemployment riots in Brixton, Merseyside, St Paul's (Bristol)
BRITISH POLITICS

1951: Churchill returns to power and kicks off the Conservative '13 years of dominance'.

1955:
- Antony Eden, Churchill's foreign secretary takes over and wins a decisive 70 seat majority.
- Gaitskell/Bevan infighting is destroying Labour's credibility. Union opposition to the right wing leadership of Gaitskell and simmering disagreements over Nuclear disarmament. Links between Labour left and the CND were off-putting for votes in the '59 election.

1956: The Suez Crisis.

1957: Eden steps down and is replaced by Macmillan.

1959:
- Macmillan leads the Conservatives to another comfortable election victory.
- Gaitskell proposes the abolition of Clause IV.

1961: That Was the Week that Was and Private Eye are launched- the birth of satire.


1963:
- The Profumo Affair
- Hugh Gaitskell dies, making way for the enigmatic Harold Wilson and party reunification, perhaps.
- Macmillan resigns due to illness. Sir Alec Douglas-Home is appointed Prime Minister behind closed doors- yet another establishment figure- grates on the general public. Wilson's meritocracy is more appealing than ever.
Divisions:

- **The North/South divide**: Britain’s financial centres were solely in London and the South. Northern communities felt strongly that the government did not represent their needs. Thatcher frequently referred to herself as the prime minister of ‘England’.
- The National Union of Miners split and allowed the formation of the Union of Democratic Miners.
- Union membership fell 30%.
- The Battle of Orgreave and the Poll Tax Riots (5000 injured) created fractures between citizens and the police force. They were no longer seen as impartial enforcers of the law but the politicised protectors of Margaret Thatcher.
- “There is no such thing as society”
- “The Battle for women’s rights has largely been won”- she was accused of purposefully excluding women from her cabinet.
- "She measured the price of everything and the value of nothing." – Tony Benn
- Rioting 1980/1 in South London, Liverpool and Bristol over unemployment.
- Football hooliganism was a worsening problem that contributed to the Hillsborough disaster in 1989.
- Pacifism, eco-terrorism, Feminism all continued to dominate political activism in the 80s.

Demographic Change:

- Urbanisation and abandoning rural lifestyles continued. 1975-90: 600,000 more people were living in greater London.

Media:

- Persistently negative media coverage of Thatcher. *Spitting Image* and *Private Eye* continued to cast a satirical eye over politics.
- Playwrights Davis Hare and Caryl Churchill (*Top Girls*) openly criticised.