Stability and longevity of parliamentary institutions
Historic identity of the major political parties
Aversion to use of political violence:
  Unconstitutional and ‘un-British’
  Baldwin on Mosley: ‘a cad and a wrong-un’
  Jon Lawrence, ‘The Transformation of British Public Politics After the First World War’ Past and Present 190 (2006): violence no longer has legitimate role in political culture of 1920s/30s

Unemployment
  • Mass unemployment
    o 1929: 1.1 million (11%); 1932: almost 3 million (17%)
  • Sectors hardest hit:
    o Staple industries: shipbuilding, coal, heavy engineering
    o Concentrated in Scotland, Wales and Northern England (67% unemployment rate in Jarrow)
  • Long term unemployment for many
    o 1935: 46% of coal miners in Rhondda valley are still unemployed
  • Contrast to more prosperous areas in south and south-east
    o 1935: unemployment rate in Oxford is 5%; in St Albans, less that 4%
  • Uneven impact, and by international standards relatively brief
    o GDP begins to grow from 1931
    o Economy grows by 25% between 1932 and 1938
  • Helped by National Government policies, including housing boom
  • For those in work, period of rising living standards:
    o Real value of wages rises, making new consumer experiences available to greater number, i.e., radios; motor cars; clothes; cinemas; holidays (Butlins opens in 1936)
    o Owner-occupier rate rises from 10% pre-war to 31% by 1939; growth of ‘suburbia’; improved housing standards e.g. running water, electricity, gardens, better insulation
    o Not just middle classes: 18% of working-class families own homes; many more benefit from new council housing schemes and slum clearance
    o Housing conditions very important in determining inter-war experiences

Class and Leisure
  • Emergence of the ‘middle brow’ in musical taste, alongside popular commercial music, heavily influenced by America jazz styles
  • Wide audience for both
  • Very few people were interested in ‘serious’ music
  • Virtually everyone knew of the Charleston
  • Rise of the Palais de Danse, purpose-built dancehalls, from the 1920s
  • In the 1930s, Birmingham had 179 licensed dance venues, Newcastle: 251, Glasgow: 256
    o James Nott, Going to the Palais: A Social and Cultural History of Dancing and Dancing Halls in Britain, 1918-60 (Oxford, 2015)
  • More central to working class leisure
  • Escapist allure?