Churchill's Government 1951-5

- 77 years old when became PM for the 2nd time.
- He regarded his return as a belated thank you from the British people for his wartime leadership.
- He was now too old and frail so was nothing much more than a figurehead.
- For some months in 1953 he was out of action altogether following a stroke, but this didn’t become public knowledge.

Developments

- Rationing was ended.
- The steel industry was denationalised.
- The Conservative Party committed itself to building 300,000 houses a year.
- The government continued with Keynesian policies.
- The accession of Queen Elizabeth II in 1952 ushered on a new ‘Elizabethan age’.
- Britain detonated its first atomic bomb in 1952.
- The Korean War ended in 1953.

‘Butskellism’

- Key figure in Churchill’s government was R.A. Butler, his chancellor of the exchequer.
- Butler never became PM or Conservative leader but he had all the major offices of state: Chancellor of the Exchequer 1951-5, home secretary 1957-62 and foreign secretary 1962-4 and was an influence in the development of modern Conservatism.
- Butler was minister of education in Churchill’s wartime coalition & was responsible for the Education Act 1944.
- Played a central role in restoring Conservative morale during the Attlee years.

Keynesian Economics

- Conservatives continued Labour’s main aims of:

- Trying to maintain full employment while at the same time achieving economic growth.
- Expanding the welfare state.
- Keeping to Britain's heavily committed military defence programme.
- Developing a nuclear weapons programme.

- Butler knew that the policies of the Labour government before 1951 had had beneficial effects in the short term.

- ‘Butskellism’ is a mixture of Butler and Hugh Gaitskell who was an MP 1945-63, Minister of fuel 1947-50, Chancellor of the Exchequer 1950-1 and leader of the Labour Party 1955-63.