

MARGARET THATCHER

WAS MARGARET THATCHER A GREAT LEADER?



She transformed the UK's economy for the better

Source 1: Extract from 'Why Privatisation has been a success story', The Independent, by Jeremy Warner, 4 January 1997

...British Telecom, now seen as a triumph of privatisation.

Think back to 1987. Here was this vast, unwieldy public utility, making profits of pounds 100 a second or whatever it was, and yet half its telephone boxes didn't work, quality of service was lousy, it was generally perceived to be expensive, there was no realistic alternative and you still had to join a waiting list to get a new telephone line.

BT was once memorably described, probably accurately, as the most hated institution in the land... BT was forced to reform itself, and fast.

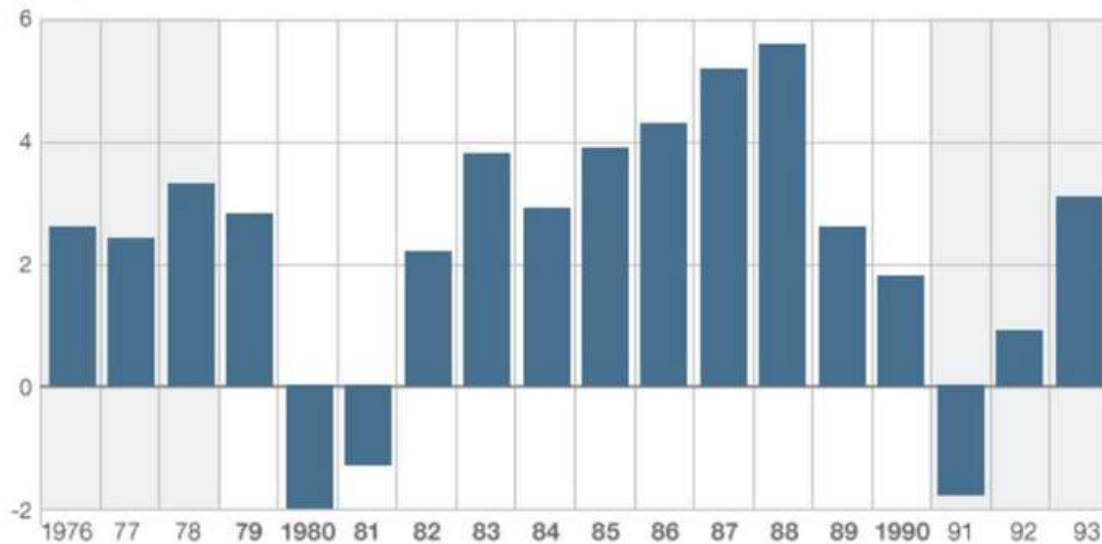
None of these strictures are recognisable in today's British Telecom. Even the Labour Party has embraced it as a model for the rest of corporate Britain. Today we have better quality of service, more choice and lower prices in Britain than almost anywhere else in the world apart from the United States. BT is also at the forefront of international developments in telecoms. Liberalisation and privatisation are the two key causes of this extraordinary turnaround.

She transformed the UK's economy for the better

Source 2: Graph of GDP growth per year, from 'The Thatcher Years in Statistics', BBC News, 9 April 2013

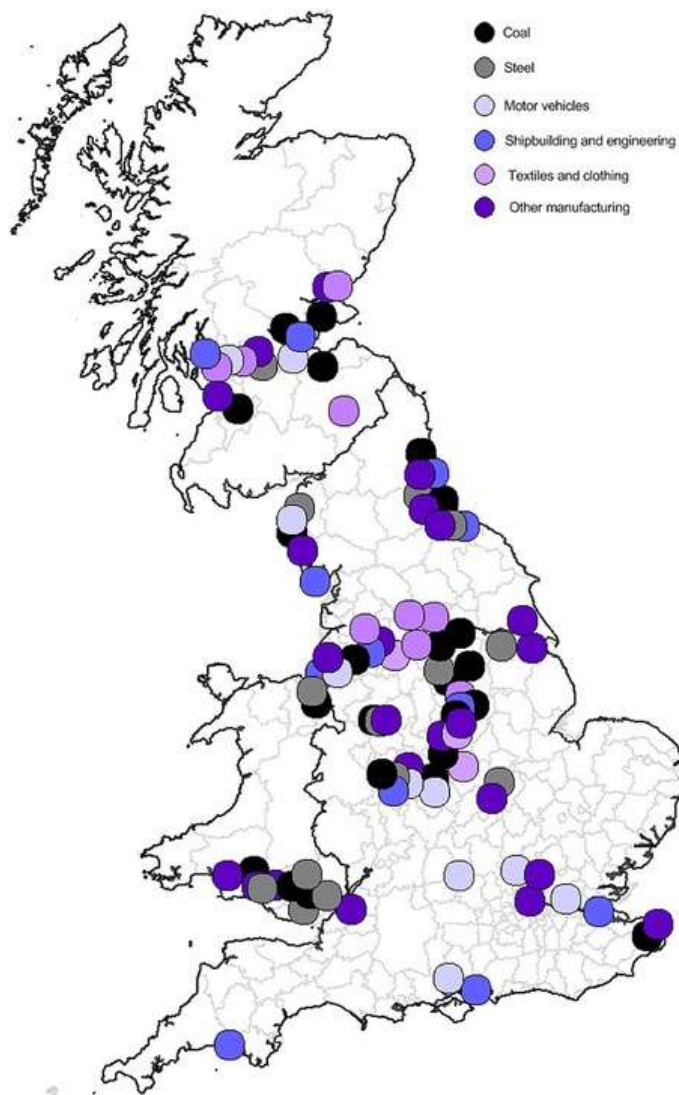
GDP

Growth, year on year, %



Source: ONS

Her economic reforms devastated many parts of the UK



Source 3: Map of major industrial job losses across Britain since 1980s

Her economic reforms devastated many parts of the UK

Source 4: Extract from 'Rising inequality linked to drop in union membership', by T. Helm, The Guardian, 10 June 2018

Times of strong unions see a smaller share of income going to the elite, study finds

The sharp **fall in trade union membership** since Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979 has directly contributed to the high levels of income inequality that the current prime minister, Theresa May, has denounced and promised to tackle, according to a new study.

The analysis, which looked at the effect unions have had in combating inequality and improving pay and working conditions in the UK and other countries, found that, where membership had fallen and union influence had decreased in workplaces, income inequalities had risen.

At the same time, wealth had become concentrated more and more in the hands of the **richest 1% in society**. Conversely, during periods when union membership had grown and in countries where unions were strong, pay inequality had declined.

She broke the trade unions who held back the UK's economy

Source 5: Extract from 'HOW THATCHER BROKE THE MINERS' STRIKE BUT AT WHAT COST?', History.co.uk, by Jeremy Warner, 4 January 1997

The miners had gone on strike twice in the previous decade. In 1972 and 1974, strikes shut down every coal mine in Britain, and a combination of solidarity strikes by the steel and railway unions and targeted picketing of coking works, ports and industrial sites brought the country to a standstill. This led to power cuts, the introduction of a three-day working week and the downfall of the Conservative government of Edward Heath. The miners were on top of the world in the 1970s, able to hold the country to ransom to stop pit closures and raise wages. But galloping over the horizon would be the woman who would prove to be their nemesis – [Margaret Thatcher](#).

Thatcher had taken note of the way the miners had brought down her predecessor and was determined the same thing would not happen to her premiership. After coming to power in 1979, she had her ministers and civil servants draw up secret plans that would keep coal moving around the country were the miners to attempt another strike.

By the early 1980s, domestic coal production was becoming ever more unprofitable. The industry relied heavily on government subsidies. Thatcher appointed the ruthless Ian McGregor to the head of the National Coal Board in 1983.

In the 1970s, the police had treated the miners with kid gloves. This time around the gloves would be off. Police from outside affected counties were bussed in to prevent picketing and strike action, and to ensure no disruption to supply lines. This led to violent clashes between the police and pickets, most notoriously at the Battle of Orgreave, where 5,000 miners faced a similar force of police officers. The police launched mounted truncheon charges against the miners, leading to 51 pickets and 72 police being injured.

The strike was officially called to a halt on March the 3rd 1985. The pit closures the miners had fought so hard to prevent began in earnest. In 1984 there were 174 deep coal mines in the UK by 1994 – the year the industry was finally privatized – there were just 15 left.

So, was it a good thing that the miners lost? From a purely economic point of view, it can be argued that it was. Deep mining for coal was already on its death bed by 1984 as cheaper exports from abroad combined with a reluctance on the part of government to continue with subsidies, a changing energy culture and a rising environmental movement all conspired against the industry. Coal was a profit-losing business in a country increasingly turning towards a services-led economy. Logically, coal mining had to go.

She broke the trade unions who held back the UK's economy

Source 6: Article covering the miners' strike from The Sun newspaper, 13 March 1984



She sold off the UK's national assets and infrastructure

Source 7: Extract from an article in The Guardian about the privatisation of water, 30 November 2022

Revealed: more than 70% of English water industry is in foreign ownership

“The deal was unbelievable - buy a refundable stake in a water monopoly and feast on the guaranteed annual bills from captive customers in exchange for nothing.”

The ownership of the water industry is being exposed as the government orders firms to spend £56bn over 25 years to reduce the scale of raw sewage discharges into waterways from storm overflows.

The government has said the cash injection amounts to the “largest infrastructure project to restore the environment in water company history”.

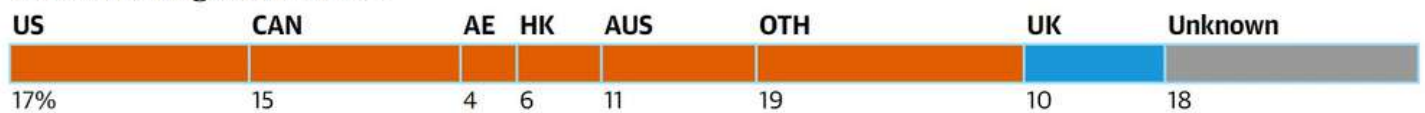
But it is not the web of international investment firms and private equity that is being asked to pay for the capital investment. Instead, ordinary customers are to foot the bill, according to the storm overflow plan released by the government.

The public will pay on average £42 a year to foot the bill for reducing sewage discharges. But some customers will pay much more; particularly those living in areas served by Wessex Water, Yorkshire Water and United Utilities who could be asked to pay more than three times that figure because their companies have the biggest investment programmes to tackle storm overflows, according to the government.

She sold off the UK's national assets and infrastructure

Source 8: Graph showing the nationality of the ownership of England's water supply in 2022

Who owns England's water?



She won the Falklands War and the Cold War

Source 9: Cartoon from Punch Magazine depicting Thatcher and Reagan against Soviet leader Yuri Andropov, 9 June 1982



"Say . . . You're beautiful when you're angry."

She won the Falklands War and the Cold War

Source 10: Extract from Margaret Thatcher's memoirs, 'The Downing Street Years', 1993

It was also on Friday 2 April that I received advice from the Foreign Office which summed up the flexibility of principle characteristic of that department. I was presented with the dangers of a backlash against the British expatriates in Argentina, problems about getting support in the UN Security Council, the lack of reliance we could place on the European Community or the United States, the risk of the Soviets becoming involved, the disadvantage of being looked at as a colonial power. All these considerations were fair enough. But when you are at war you cannot allow the difficulties to dominate your thinking: you have to set out with an iron will to overcome them. And anyway what was the alternative? That a common or garden dictator should rule over the Queen's subjects and prevail by fraud and violence? Not while I was Prime Minister.

She made the tense situation in Northern Ireland worse

Source 11: Graffiti quoting Thatcher's comments on IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands in Belfast, 2013



She made the tense situation in Northern Ireland worse

Source 12: Extract from 'Margaret Thatcher was the 'quintessential hate figure', says Mary Lou McDonald', BBC News, 28 December 2018

Margaret Thatcher was the "quintessential hate figure", Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald has said.

Mrs McDonald said growing up against the backdrop of the hunger strikes made her realise "there was a problem in Ireland".

In 1981, 10 republican inmates, including Bobby Sands, died during an IRA hunger strike over a dispute about political prisoner status in the Maze Prison.

Of the then prime minister, Mrs McDonald said she was the "quintessential hate figure at that time".

"I would say almost universally by people who would describe themselves as nationalist or republican, not simply Sinn Féiners," she added.

"The malice with which she approached a situation that was hugely politically fraught, but was also hugely human, and to see the men die, one after the other." Mrs Thatcher refused to grant the prisoners any privileges.

"Crime is crime is crime," she said at the time. "It is not political."

She secured concessions from the European Union

Source 13: Cartoon highlighting Thatcher's success in securing the rebate for the UK, from French newspaper Le Monde, June 1984



She secured concessions from the European Union

Source 14: Thatcher at the Press Conference after Dublin European Council, 29 November 1979

“One of the difficulties here has been to get clear the nature of the problem. We are not asking for a penny piece of [European] Community money for Britain, what we are asking is for a very large amount of our own money back”

Her policies were racist and homophobic

Source 15: Extract from 'We must acknowledge the legacy of the Brixton Riots' by Siddy Shivdasani, in London newspaper The Metro, 10 April 2021

At the beginning of April, 'Operation Swamp 81' was launched in Brixton after Thatcher said the country 'might be rather swamped by people with a different culture'...Brian Paddick...was serving as a sergeant in Brixton at the time of the riot [1981 Brixton riot]. He said: 'We were the occupying army.'...Within five days, 943 people were stopped and searched...Black men were almost exclusively targeted...

Her policies were racist and homophobic

Source 16: Cartoon on Thatcher's refusal to put sanctions on apartheid South Africa, 1986



Her policies were racist and homophobic

Clause 28 was ratified by the House of Commons on 9th March. It will receive the royal assent in April and be law in June. **Clause 28** is the worst attack on lesbian and gay lives this century. **Clause 28** is designed to outlaw the 'promotion' of homosexuality by a local authority and to prevent the teaching of the acceptability of homosexuality as a 'pretended family relationship'. **Clause 28** is an attack on teachers who attempt to suggest that lesbian or gay relationships are acceptable. **Clause 28** is an attack on lesbian or gay parents. **Clause 28** is an attack on the production of lesbian or gay theatre. **Clause 28** is an attack on public libraries that stock lesbian or gay literature. **Clause 28** is an attack on lesbian or gay counselling or advice services. **Clause 28** is an attack on projects that house lesbians and gays. **Clause 28** is an attack on lesbian and gay bars all of which are licenced by local authorities. **Clause 28** will encourage discrimination, bigotry and violence against lesbians and gays.

EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL FIGHT FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS

JOIN THE MARCH ON LONDON

**April 30th/Assemble Embankment
at 12.00**

**Rally and festival Kennington Park
at 3.00**

**Entertainment/food/drink/safe area/creche.
Signers/transport for people with disabilities.**

**Speakers include representatives from
Women Against Pit Closures, COHSE, NUPE, NALGO.**

The campaign needs £10,000

**send your donation now to Stop the Clause Campaign,
c/o ULU Malet St., WC1 Tel 580 9551**

Make cheques payable to Stop Clause 27

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31/39 Redchurch St. E2.

Source 17: Flyer calling people to join a protest against Clause 28, by the Stop the Clause campaign, 1988

She foresaw global developments and rewrote British politics accordingly

Source 18: Extract from Thatcher's speech to the UN General Assembly in November 1989

"What we are now doing to the world ... is new in the experience of the Earth. It is mankind and his activities that are changing the environment of our planet in damaging and dangerous ways. The result is that change in future is likely to be more fundamental and more widespread than anything we have known hitherto. Change to the sea around us, change to the atmosphere above, leading in turn to change in the world's climate, which could alter the way we live in the most fundamental way of all.

"The environmental challenge that confronts the whole world demands an equivalent response from the whole world. Every country will be affected and no one can opt out. Those countries who are industrialised must contribute more to help those who are not."

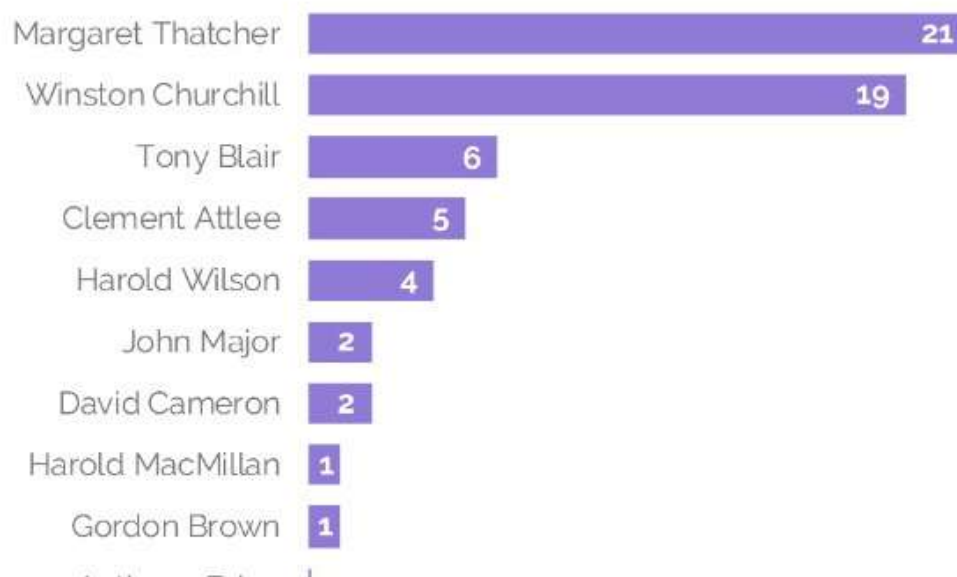


She foresaw global developments and rewrote British politics accordingly

Source 19: Poll by YouGov on Britain's greatest post-war Prime Ministers, April 2019

Margaret Thatcher is seen as Britain's greatest post-war PM

Who do you think has been the greatest British Prime Minister since 1945?
% (don't knows are not shown)



She foresaw global developments and rewrote British politics accordingly

Source 20: Cartoon showing Tony Blair emerging from Thatcher's head, The Guardian, 9 April 2013



She left the UK an extremely divided country

Source 21: A mock funeral in Goldthorpe, Yorkshire for Thatcher held to celebrate her death, April 2013



She left the UK an extremely divided country

Source 22: Extract from an interview with Alex Salmond, leader of the Scottish National Party, April 2013

As an unintended consequence of some of her policies, she accelerated a move toward a Scottish Parliament. She managed to alienate a full spectrum of Scottish society...I opposed Margaret Thatcher's economic policies, I thought they were mistaken. But I've always held the belief that the reason Margaret Thatcher had the political effect she did in Scotland was about the social direction of her policies. [It was] exemplified in the poll tax but also in a range of other statements such as, "There's no such thing as society. There are only individuals," which ran counter to a collective consciousness of Scotland. What is that collective consciousness if it's not a national consciousness?...

It was indeed an unintentional effect. I think it genuinely puzzled her. I suspect what she was running across was a different national consciousness. The poll tax wasn't just unpopular in Scotland, but it didn't have the same political effect because in Scotland it represented a wider social agenda that people found impossible to accept. Therefore, I quite freely say that she did accelerate the move toward a Scottish parliament because people no longer saw the parliament as a nice idea. They saw it as something essential to protect the social fabric of the country.