Background

Labour becomes the main opposition party.
Liberals are kicked to third place.
Conservatives are relatively the same.

Decline of the Liberals

Pre-WWI was one of two major parties, main rival the Conservatives.
Key figures: Asquith and Lloyd George.

Causes:

- Dangerfield said: failure to cope with threat of TU strikes, NI and suffragette militancy.
- Bernstein said: failure to adopt to class -based voting habits.

Most historians reject these views: would have been able to survive if not for events after 1914.

- Wilson said: "rampant omnibus"; split of party.
- Coupon Election: cemented the split, alliance of LG with Tories.
- ROTP Act 1918: allowed Labour to rise, but Liberals failed to adapt.
- LG's Cash for Honours scheme.
- FPTP system: favoured bi-party system.

Rise of Labour

A minor party, until 1923 when it got more votes than Liberals and Ramsay MacDonald became the first Labour PM.
Labour party biggest in 1929, MacDonald PM again.

Causes:

- Unified post-WWI
- Huge growth in TU membership
- Ran local politics well: e.g. didn't discriminate candidates by class
- Growing working-class identity
- Liberal split- Asquith backed Labour government but gambled and lost, MacDonald's economic policies good, would be remembered in 1929

Consistent Conservatives

Conservative staying the same
Stays consistent throughout, always one of top two biggest parties. Stability, family values.
Key figures: Stanley Baldwin.

Causes:

- Rebranding began in 1872 under Benjamin Disraeli. One-nation party idea. Built on by Baldwin.
- Targeted the Liberals to win. Better alternative to combat Labour.
- Benefitted from ROTP Act (plural voting for Oxbridge students/staff, wealthier, Tory voters), Irish independence, FPTP system.

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