

Topic Page: [Heath, Edward](#)

Definition: **Heath, Sir Edward Richard George** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

British statesman, prime minister (1970-74). He entered Parliament in 1950. In 1965, he became leader of the Conservative Party, succeeding Harold Wilson as prime minister. Heath secured Britain's membership of the European Community (EC) (1973), but poor industrial relations led to a bitter miners' strike and the introduction of a 'three-day week' (1974). Defeated in two elections in 1974, the following year Margaret Thatcher replaced Heath as Conservative Party leader. Heath remained an outspoken advocate of European integration even after his retirement from the Commons in 2001.

Summary Article: **Heath, Edward (Richard George)**

from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

British Conservative politician, party leader 1965–75. As prime minister 1970–74 he took the UK into the European Community (EC) but was brought down by economic and industrial-relations crises at home. He was replaced as party leader by Margaret Thatcher in 1975, and became increasingly critical of her policies and her opposition to the UK's full participation in the EC. During John Major's administration 1990–97, he undertook missions in Iraq in 1990 and 1993 to negotiate the release of British hostages, but also continued his attacks on 'Eurosceptics' within the party. He stepped down as an MP in 2001.

Born in Broadstairs, Kent, he was educated at Chatham House Grammar School, Ramsgate, and Balliol College, Oxford University (where he was president of the Oxford Union in 1939). During World War II he was commissioned in the Royal Artillery 1940–46. In 1950 he was elected Conservative MP for Bexley and made quick progress, becoming government chief whip 1955–59; minister of labour 1959–60; Lord Privy Seal 1960–63; and president of the Board of Trade 1963–64. An enthusiastic 'European', he led the British delegation that first attempted to negotiate entry to the European Economic Community 1961–63. Although the negotiations failed eventually because of the disapproval of the French leader Gen de Gaulle, they brought him to public notice as a representative of the progressive and modern trend in Conservative politics. Heath became leader of the Conservative Party in 1965 after Alec Douglas-Home's defeat in the 1964 general election, but was defeated by the Labour prime minister Harold Wilson in a snap election in March 1966. Against all poll indications, Heath won the June 1970 general election to become prime minister. Heath came to power pledging to reduce the increases in prices, put labour relations on a firmer legal basis, and negotiate favourable terms for the UK's entry to the EEC. His Industrial Relations Act of 1971 led to industrial unrest by post office workers and the miners, and at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, where the workers took over the premises. However, Heath achieved his ambition of British entry to the EEC on 1 January 1973, after a close vote in Parliament and without a referendum. Heath was buffeted by economic troubles, with unemployment increasing to over 1 million, and, after an economic boom in 1972, with world commodity prices rising sharply, inflation soared. This forced the government to introduce Counter Inflation Acts, to halt rises in office rents, some commodity prices, and basic earnings. In 1972 and the winter of 1973–74 Heath's industrial and economic policies were directly challenged by miners' strikes. The government gave in to the miners' wage demand in 1972, but in February 1974 Heath took up the miners' challenge. He called a general election, which he lost, and, unable to form a coalition with the Liberal Party, a minority Labour government came to power. Heath remained leader of the

Conservative Party for the election of October 1974, but his leadership and policies came under increasing criticism and in February 1975 he was successfully challenged for the leadership by Margaret Thatcher.

quotations

Heath, Edward (Richard George)

APA

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Heath, Edward (Richard George). (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/heath_edward_1916



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