# The Reconstruction
# Of The
# Conservative Party of Great Britain
# 1945-1951.

by

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Preface:

The rejection of Mr. Churchill and his party in the General Election of 1945, on the morrow of victory in Europe, astounded the world. It has proved to be an event of durable public and historical interest. It is my purpose in this thesis to assay the reasons why the Tories were so humiliated in 1945 and then to proceed to an examination and analysis of the prodigious efforts of the Conservative to apply the lessons of defeat. The success of this program of Conservative Reconstruction, in all its diversity, gave the party renewed confidence in itself and to some extent provided the electors with new reasons why they should trust the government of the country to the Conservative Party. This is an intimate study of the practice of politics in modern Britain.

I selected this subject because I wanted to work on something which was of fundamental importance and comprehensive in its scope. I hoped also to elucidate the details of that phase of Winston Churchill's career, his role as Leader of the Opposition, which was little known. I was aware of the danger and difficulty of making categorical judgments on events which were so recent, but I felt that the subject was attractive enough to justify the risk. There was a mountain of material bearing on the subject and this was further mitigated by the fact that here was an area where an historical concensus was clearly beginning to form. The publication in October, 1964 of J. D. Hoffman's book, The Conservative Party in Opposition, made my task much easier, but I have not used it as a crutch. I searched out virtually every reference to the Conservative Party in the 1945-51 editions of The Economist, Spectator, and the New Statesman. The Times was my basic source and I touched on in some way most of the copies in the period. There were, furthermore,

numerous articles in various political science journals which directly pertained to the subject and these were faithfully read. Many memoirs have already appeared but there are still numerous gaps, notably in the cases of Richard A. Butler and Harold Macmillan. We also lack any authoritative account of the roles of Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden in this great program of Tory revival. A really good memoir from Butler, a key figure in the story, would be of the greatest significance in gaining an inside view of the affairs of the party in those years. The Conservative Party is inordinately reticent about its affairs, and even Hoffman, who worked on his book in London and at the Library of the Central Office, does not betray any knowledge of the unofficial, non-public side of the party. Presumably, the most important decisions and information were kept confidential. The memoir of the Earl of Woolton, Chairman of the Party for most of this period, has been published but it does not reveal very much about his activities at the Central Office. This thesis then, presents ~~only~~ the public view of the reconstruction of the Conservative Party.

The unpublished Ph. D. dissertation of John S. Saloma, entitled British Conservatism and the Welfare State.... was acquired from Harvard and it proved truly invaluable in giving the appropriate historical background to the events of 1945-51 in the Tory Party. Without Saloma a correct evaluation would have been impossible, because I would have erred on the side of thinking it too unique.

The Conservative Central Office was kind enough to supply without charge a large number of their publications from this period and relating to it. By themselves they give an excellent picture of the diversity and unity of the Tory revival. The British Information Service was extremely helpful in providing bibliographical information and

assistance in finding needed items. My sincere thanks go to the C. C. O. and the B. I. S.

I cannot claim to have made any great contribution to the full understanding of these remarkable events. The chief merit of this thesis is that it draws together a great mass of material and sifts it down to a rather short book, without, I believe, sacrificing any of the vital points. When a great political party uses the harsh impetus of an electoral disaster to look in upon itself and to examine its failure critically with an eye to winning again soon, and does, then there are many things to be learned. If The Reconstruction of the Conservative Party did not absolutely win the Election of 1951, when Churchill was returned as Prime Minister, it surely provided the margin of victory in that extremely narrow contest.

The importance of the subject and the difficulties imposed on me by its size and complexity provided a great and very satisfying challenge for almost two years of my life.

Ray Lucian Garland
Charlottesville, Virginia
May 15, 1966.


"...YOU CAN'T VOTE FOR WINSTON CHURCHILL UNLESS YOU HAPPEN TO LIVE IN WOODFORD"
—SIR WILLIAM BEVERIDGE
WOODFORD
WOODFORD ON DOGGER BANK
TO BALLY WOODFORD IN ULSTER
VICKY

TORY DREAM


LOVE ME, LOVE MY DOG

# CHAPTER I

## THE DEFEAT OF 1945

On May 23, 1945 when Mr. Churchill, on behalf of the National Coalition Government, tendered his resignation to the King and asked for a dissolution of Parliament, "...a period of co-operation unequalled in the history of this country was brought to its conclusion."[1] It had been achieved by means of an heroic restraint on the partisan behavior of the principal political parties of the land. In the interests of national unity and the more vigorous prosecution of the war, the three major parties had imposed on themselves a condition approaching political inactivity. The Chief Whips had signed a document on September 26, 1939 pledging their respective groups not to nominate candidates at by-elections against the nominee of the party which had held the seat at the time of the vacancy. The truce was to hold good during the war or until one party gave notice that it intended to dissociate itself from the agreement. In an expression of the same mood, Parliament extended itself into the tenth year of its existence by a series of Prolongation of Parliament Acts. The view was widely held that the political truce would last only to the end of the war with Germany.

It was only natural that the Left would become more restless in such a situation. The Tory majority over Labour had been 268 at the

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1 R. B. McCallum and Alison Readman, The British General Election of 1945 (London, 1947), p. 1.

1935 General Election. This was very nearly the maximum majority which the Tories could have hoped for over Labour. As Conservative policy in the period 1935-1940 had been exposed as lamentably wrong, it can be considered likely that had an election been held in the normal course of things the Tories would have been the heavy loser in seats. The Labour leaders and their rank-and-file had to forego, because of patriotism, a good chance to improve vastly their situation in Parliament. Not only did the Tories escape retribution in 1940 for their grave errors of policy, but with a new and imposing leader they appeared to be getting the main credit for winning the war. It is to the great credit of the principals of the Labour Party that they put country above party in such a situation; but many of their more left leaning adherents did not take such a lofty view. In the debate on the Prolongation of Parliament Act in 1942, several Labour M. P. 's expressed their distaste at the continued existence of the Parliament of 1935 now that the main danger to Britain had passed. This uneasiness was reflected in the country. There were four by-elections during 1942 where irregular opponents of Tory candidates were victorious. The emergence of Sir Richard Acland's Common Wealth Party and increased activity on the part of the Independent Labour Party were symptoms of submerged and widespread voter discontent. Resolutions to end the electoral truce were introduced at the Labour Party annual conferences of 1942 and 1943, but they were defeated. In fact, the conditions of the truce were even more rigidly observed--henceforth, Conservative candidates at by-elections received letters of support from Mr. Attlee in addition to one from Mr. Churchill.[2]

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[2] Ibid., p. 5.

In 1943 this general discontent within the Labour left-wing was crystallized by the Coalition's reception of the famous Beveridge Report. Many Labour M. P.'s considered the statement of the Government's intentions to be so unsatisfactory that they tabled an amendment expressing their objections. This amendment was defeated by 335 votes to 119, but it was nevertheless significant that all the Labour M. P.'s outside the Government, save two, voted in the lobby opposite from their own leaders.[3]

As the end of the German war loomed in sight the politicians began to perk up, and the public platforms of the nation echoed with partisan speeches. The Times took note of this and expressed the view that "In all parties there is much agreement that the present state of political tension and instability should not be allowed to continue."[4] It was from these preliminary maneuvers that the first issue of the 1945 campaign arose: the timing of the General Election. Mr. Churchill started things off badly for his party by incurring the suspicion of sharp practice.

On May 19th he sent a letter to the leaders of the Labour and Liberal Parties proposing a continuation of the Coalition until the end of the war against Japan, or, if this was refused, an election early in July.[5] Mr. Attlee rejected this proposal and asserted that everybody was expecting an election that year. (It was thought that the war in the East would last another twelve to eighteen months.) He pointed out that there were acute party differences concerning the reconstruction of the country and that his colleagues did not consider that the controversy

3 Ibid., pp. 6-7. 4 The Times, May 19, 1945, p. 4.

5 The Times, May 22, 1945, p. 4.

could be laid aside now that the expectation of an election had been aroused. Though he did not want to pledge his party to the continuation of the Coalition until Japan was beaten, Mr. Attlee urged the Prime Minister not to insist on a July election. Attlee recommended a contest in the autumn when a more accurate voter register would be available. This would also allow enough time for the servicemen, remote from home, to consider the issues and the candidates. He argued that a few months more of the Coalition would give the country a stronger position in the settlement of the problems of Germany. Mr. Attlee compared Churchill's move for a July election with the rushed Khaki Election of 1918. In this connection he said, "...I am bound to state that the reasons for rejecting an autumn election seem to me to be based on party expediency."[6] Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Liberal Leader, replied to Churchill's letter in a similar vein.[7] The Times, however, agreed with Mr. Churchill, that if the Coalition could not be continued to the end of the war against Japan, then a July election was to be preferred to a postponement.[8] The debate over who was responsible for the break-up of the Coalition continued to be a main Tory theme in the campaign, occupying a prominence which it certainly did not deserve. Labour had the perfect answer to the Tory charge that they were responsible; that is, Mr. Churchill put out the plea for a continuation of the Coalition knowing that it would be rejected, thus putting Labour in a bad light, and softening the charge that he had precipitated a snap election in order to capitalize on the aura of victory which surrounded him. The whole issue could then be written off as a Tory stunt.

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6 The Times, May 22, 1945, p. 4. 7 The Times, May 23, 1945, p. 4.
8 The Times, May 24, 1945, p. 5.


## FAREWELL

"Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part."

Thus it was that Mr. Churchill led his party into battle, seemingly oblivious to the many portents which would have been sobering to a less stubborn mind. The by-election results and various public opinion polls should have indicated to him the difficult nature of his party's task. The very rusty condition of the Tory political machine should have made him pause before rushing into a quick election. The excited reception given to Beveridge's Report should have made him aware that the nation wanted a policy statement full of specific remedies for the social and economic problems of Great Britain--that the public was in the mood for measures rather than political personalities and sham issues. The success of the Coalition with its fine spirit of co-operation, and the fact that the war still continued should have convinced him that overt partisanship was out-of-place. On almost every count Mr. Churchill was wrongheaded about the Election of 1945. The errors were so grave, so glaring, and so costly that they resulted in a revolution within the Conservative Party, which is the main subject of this thesis. The haphazard nature of the Tory effort in 1945 serves as an effective means to bring into bold relief the later reformation. If this work were the advertisement for a patent medicine, this first chapter could well be titled the "Before Picture," so great is the seeming contrast with later General Elections.

Apparently the Conservatives had considered the electoral truce of 1939 to mean that the internal activities of the party should be sharply curtailed. The war in any event would have drastically reduced the efficiency of the party apparatus. The Tories held no annual conference

in the years 1939 thru 1942. At the conferences of 1943 and 1944 there was no real appreciation of the threat which hung over the party, nor was there any attempt made to enunciate a policy for post-war Britain. McCallum and Readman state categorically that the structural organization of the Conservative Party suffered a far greater decline during the war years than did Labour's. In many constituencies the party simply closed up shop for the duration; in others a handful of elderly gentlefolk tried to keep things going. On the other hand, the continued vitality of the trades unions prevented the Labour Party from suffering a similar decline. They continued to spread Socialist propaganda even where the regular party organization was in eclipse. They planned for the day when a General Election would come. The Tories entered the electoral battle of 1945 with their forces in disorder due to six years of wartime neglect.[9]

The Labour Party was in conference when the date for the election was set by the Prime Minister, and they had their statement of policy, entitled Let Us Face The Future, ready for issuance to the public. Whatever its defects from an ideological view, the Labour Manifesto was a lucid statement of Socialist policy. Those who read it knew what the Labour Party would do if it was given power. It was a document full of measures, enough to occupy a government with a sizeable majority for a full term of office. If the Welfare State plus nationalization, economic planning, and controls was what the people of Britain wanted, they could get it for certain from a Labour Government. It was all down in print and the Labour Party was united behind the document. Commentators are agreed that it was a powerful statement of policy.

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[9] McCallum, p. 5.

It was not until June 10, 1945, almost three weeks after Let Us Face The Future had been presented, that Mr. Churchill offered the Tory Manifesto, The Four Year Plan for Britain, to the electors. The fact that the policy statement was not ready for so long after the election announcement was in itself a bad sign for the Conservatives. It is natural to suppose that parties of the right cannot be as specific nor as sweeping in their policy statements as those of the left can--there must be more restraint, greater generality, and less commitment to specific reforms. Mr. Churchill seldom tired of pointing out that it was a bad thing to detail policy too much in advance of events. The Four Year Plan was by no means a reactionary document, nor was it even conservative by American standards then or now. The very title itself suggested that the Tories accepted the idea that the State had a considerable role to play in the direction of the economy and in the provisions of social services. The Manifesto of 1945 was a compromise between the reformist and conventional traditions of the Conservative Party. In many respects it was liberal and far-seeing, but there were other parts which were uninspiring and ill-suited to the mood of the electorate. On balance, however, it appears to have been a good statement of policy. The main question was could the Tories be entrusted to implement it?

It is interesting to compare the Manifesto of 1945 with the one issued by Mr. Baldwin in the 1935 General Election. The latter was a less liberal document, but not greatly so. There are enough similarities between the two statements to show that the Tories were being consistent and that their liberalism of 1945 was no abrupt about face.

The Times found the 1935 policy very much to its liking, though it is difficult to know, after a careful reading, why the editor was so rhapsodic: "So enlightened a foreign policy, so reasonable a regard for national defence, and so vast a programme for social reform as are contained in the Government's Manifesto could not come from an alliance in which reactionary sentiment of any kind was predominant."[10] The next day the paper said that "The advancement of health, happiness, and social security are the three great objects set before the next Parliament by Mr. Baldwin's Government."[11] In fact, important social achievemnts were made, particularly in the realm of housing and health, but they were overshadowed in the public mind by the results of the Baldwin-Chamberlain defence and foreign policies.

The 1945 Conservative Manifesto naturally went far beyond the program of ten years before. World War II had been in a large sense a people's war and it had stimulated much hope that life would be more egalitarian in post-war Britain. The homes for heroes promised in 1918 had not materialized, nor had the jobs. There was the feeling that this time things must be different. The Beveridge Report and its enthusiastic reception were symptoms of this, as was the Tory Reform Committee, about which so much was heard and written. Clearly the nation was in a mood of high expectancy and it was not likely to be satisfied by hedging or mere rhetoric. In The Four Year Plan the Tories had a good start in complying with this mood. In the campaign they tended to forget and too often they lapsed into traditional, and not very attractive political tactics, rather than exploit the positive side of their policy statement.

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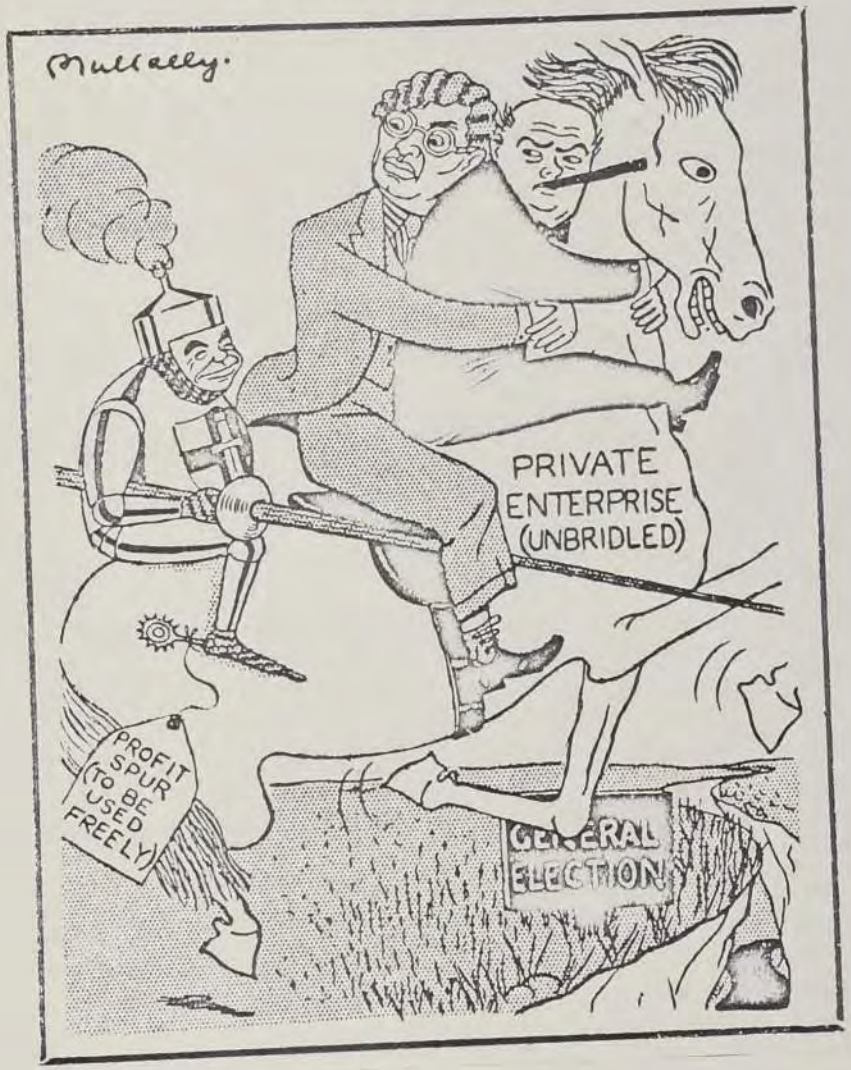
10 The Times, October 28, 1935, p. 15. 11 The Times, October 29, 1935, p. 15.

TRIBUNE 25th May 1945




From left to right: Lord Beaverbrook, publisher of The Daily Express and Tory militant; Mr. Brendan Bracken, an M. P. and one of Churchill's closest friends and advisors; and Mr. Winston Churchill.

The preface to The Four Year Plan contained much that was typical of the Tory bias in favor of free enterprise and individualism, but there were other parts which could have been comfortably accepted by the Labour Party. In the former connection there was the assertion that "This is the time for freeing energies, not stifling them. Britain's greatness has been built on character and daring, not on docility to a State machine. At all costs we must preserve that spirit of independence."[12] Speaking of first essentials the Manifesto said: "...free enterprise must be given the chance and the encouragement to plan ahead...on the basis of mutual co-operation between industry and the State; rather than control by the State...."[13] A natural corollary to this was: "We stand for the removal of controls as quickly as the need for them disappears....We intend to guard the people of this country against those who, under the guise of war necessity, would like to impose upon Britain for their own purposes a permanent system of bureaucratic control, reeking of totalitarianism."[14] In a similar vein the Tories stated, "It will be our main aim...to make an early reduction in taxation."[15] The Manifesto was adamant on the subject of nationalization: "We will not allow drastic changes of ownership to be forced upon industries on no evidence except a political theory.... to us the tests will always be--what will conduce most to efficiency...."[16] Whether the Conservatives meant to imply that some State ownership might come under their administration is unclear. Following the statement above was "...against the advocates of State ownership and control, we stand for the fullest opportunity for go and push in all ranks...."[17]

12 The Times, June 11, 1945, p. 2. 13 Ibid. 14 Ibid., p. 8.
15 Ibid. 16 Ibid. 17 Ibid.

Coal was an industry which was recognized to have special problems, but the Tories concluded that a "...mere change of ownership of the collieries...." would offer no solution. The Tory plan for coal was to leave the industry in private hands while establishing national guidelines for improvement under the direction of the Ministry of Fuel in co-operation with the industry itself. "This policy will preserve the incentives of free enterprise and safeguard the industry from the dead hand of State ownership or political interference in...management."[18] The Conservative position on agriculture was similar: "The war-time directions and controls will be progressively reduced as our food situation improves, and consequently the functions of the county agricultural executive committees will progressively be limited to that of affording leadership, help, and advice."[19] That is, instead of direction. It is not possible to say that election manifestoes have any great bearing on the decisions of the voters, but they do tend to set the theme for the campaign as they are used by candidates to write their speeches and election addresses. The press, of course, must take the policy statements seriously. The Four Year Plan suggests that the Tories put too much emphasis on the theme of free enterprise can do the job for the mood of 1945. It had been put across that the Conservative Party and its business adherents had failed the nation in the period between the wars.

The Tories were quite specific on the question of housing. In his good but brief essay on the General Election of 1945, William Morgan said, "Mr. Churchill never really sensed that housing was the one crucial issue."[20] I can share this view only with regard to the development of the campaign on the radio, but even here it was often discussed, though

18 Ibid. 19 Ibid.

20 R. L. Schuyler and H. Ausubel, (eds.), The Making of English History (New York, 1952), p. 659.


## THE HOUSES THAT JACK OUGHT TO BUILD

The Conservatives were very much aware of the great need to construct large numbers of houses, both public and private.

perhaps not with sufficient force. In the Manifesto, however, the Conservatives were unequivocal:

> In the first years of peace the provision of homes will be the greatest domestic task....Prices of materials must be controlled as long as supplies are short....Subsidies will be necessary for local authorities and for private enterprise alike....In the first two years...we intend to build at least 220,000 permanent new houses and have a further 80,000 under way....We must supplement this with at least 150,000 well equipped temporary houses that can be put up quickly.[21]

On the same subject the Tories said that "so long as there is a serious shortage of houses, rent control must continue."[22] They promised also to secure the best use of land in the public interest, but there was an understandable vagueness to this proposal.

Social security and services were by no means neglected in the Manifesto. For the voters it could only be a question of which party could be trusted to implement the Welfare State. All the parties were recommending greater and better social services. On the subject of medicine the Tories said,

> The health services of the country will be made available to all citizens. Everyone will contribute to the cost, and no one will be denied the attention, the treatment, or the appliances he requires because he cannot afford them. We propose to create a comprehensive health service covering the whole range of medical treatment....[23]

The Conservative Party was similarly liberal in its promises on national insurance: "One of our most important tasks will be to pass into law and bring into action as soon as we can a nation-wide and compulsory scheme of national insurance based on the plan announced by the Government of all parties in 1944."[24] Included in this section was a promise of family allowances in order to bring up the standard-of-living

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21 The Times, June 11, 1945, p. 8. 22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., p. 2. 24 Ibid.

of the lower classes.

The Butler Education Act of 1944 had proposed a sweeping policy for the gradual improvement of the British educational system. The Conservatives pointed to this measure with great pride as an example of what could be expected from them in the post-war Britain. They promised to implement the full terms of the act within twenty years. Beyond this they pledged their support to the theoretic individualism which was one of the chief features of their 1945 campaign: "Our object is to provide education which will not produce a standardized or utility child, useful only as a cog in a nationalized and bureaucratic machine...."[25]

In the short interval after the break-up of the Coalition and the dissolution of the old Parliament there was a debate in the Commons on the issue of monopolies. It had always been alleged that British business was too much inclined toward monopolistic practices and Labour made the most of the debate. Emanuel Shinwell declared that "The principal monopolists of this country, directly or indirectly, are in His Majesty's Government."[26] The Tories answered in their Manifesto with a strong and creditable statement on the subject:

> We must guard against abuses to which monopolies may give rise. It is vital that there should be effective protection of the consumers' interests and of independent business...against any such abuse....The right remedy against harmful restrictive practices is to set up an independent tribunal before which charges of monopoly abuse can be laid.[27]

Here again the Tories seemed to make a positive commitment to correct abuses which many admitted required attention; the question only being whether they could be trusted to do so.

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25 Ibid., p. 8. 26 McCallum, p. 132.

27 The Times, June 11, 1945, p. 8.

One of the critical issues of the Election of 1945 was which party could be best trusted to maintain full employment. Labour exploited the memory of the high level of unemployment which prevailed in the 1930's. Perhaps more than any other question this occupied the attention of radio and platform speakers. The Tories, in their Manifesto, were quite specific as to their intentions: "The Government accepts as one of its primary aims...the maintenance of a high and stable level of employment."[28]

The Conservative pronouncement on imperial policy was avowedly liberal in tone. There was no old fashioned Toryism here. India was to be granted "...a fuller opportunity to achieve Dominion status." This was, however, qualified. "We should remember those friends who stood by us in our hour of peril, and should be ever mindful of our obligations towards minorities and the Indian States." With regard to other possessions of the Crown the Manifesto said, "Our responsibility... is to lead them forward to self-governing institutions; to help them raise their standards of life...."[29]

The conclusion to the long statement of policy was traditionally Tory, "Our programme is not based upon unproved theories...but upon principles that have been tested...and not found wanting. We commend it to the country not as offering an easy road...but because, while safeguarding our ancient liberties, it tackles practical problems in a practical way."[30] The policy statement of the Conservative Party was a nice compromise between the Socialist program of the Left and traditional Tory principles. The Times gave it a rather unfriendly reception, but it pointed out that the "one outstanding value of the

[28] Ibid., p. 2. [29] Ibid. [30] Ibid., p. 8.

declaration...is that it shows more clearly than ever how broad is the ground that the parties have in common."[31] Had the Manifesto been properly exploited the Conservatives might have held down their losses; but the chief spokesmen of the party, and particularly Mr. Churchill, more often than not ignored party policy in favor of the fanciful pursuit of issues which were unreal or out-of-tune with the grim mood of the voters. A more cautious approach would have admitted the liabilities of the Conservative Party and concentrated on assuring the people that things would be different after the war--that Mr. Churchill would attack the problems of peace in the same positive and energetic way that he handled the war effort.

The first great sensation of the 1945 Election was Mr. Churchill's broadcast of June 4th. The violence and uncouthness of his language undoubtedly shocked many people. After reproaching the Labour and Liberal Parties for abandoning the Coalition and forcing an election upon the nation in time of war, he went on to deliver a tremendous attack on Socialism and the plans of the leaders of the Labour Party. He said:

> Socialism is, in its essence, an attack not only upon British enterprise but upon the right of an ordinary man or woman to breathe freely without having a harsh, clumsy, tyrannical hand clapped across their mouth and nostrils....But I will go further, I declare it to you from the bottom of my heart, that no Socialist Government...could afford to allow free...expressions of public discontent. They would have to fall back on some form of Gestapo....this would nip opinion in the bud; it would stop criticism as it reared its head, and it would gather all the power to the supreme party and the party leaders, rising like stately pinnacles above their vast bureaucracies of Civil Servants, no longer servants and no longer civil....let me tell you that once a Socialist Government begins monkeying with the credit of Britain...there is no man or woman in this country who has...accumulated a nest-egg...who will not run the risk of seeing it shrivel....A Socialist Government which had got control of the Bank of England could issue notes that would destroy the value of any scrap of savings or nest-egg....[32]

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[31] The Times, June 11, 1945, p. 5. [32] The Times, June 5, 1945, p. 4.

The crudities of this speech and its conscious revival of the 1931 "Postal Savings Scare" shocked responsible opinion in the country.

The Times felt that "The transition to the manner of common party polemic is...uncomfortably abrupt."[33] The Spectator said, "The Election campaign is warming up. The Prime Minister indeed set the thermostat a little higher than was essential in his opening speech....Mr. Churchill's harsh words...will soon be forgotten, but there is not much gained by using them at all."[34]

Mr. Attlee's riposte came the next evening and his calm, reasonable approach made Mr. Churchill's bombast look very discreditable by comparison. His scorn was understated and abreviated, with just the proper biting edge: "The voice we heard last night was that of Mr. Churchill, but the mind was that of Lord Beaverbrook."[35] He spent very little time answering the Prime Minister's wild charges, preferring instead to concentrate on an exposition of Labour's policy. Commenting on Attlee's speech The Times said, "In replying to the Prime Minister's broadcast... Mr. Attlee refrained from the 'fighting speech', and in so doing was undoubtedly wise...."[36] The New Statesman was perceptive in its comment:

> By seeking to represent the best in our three parties Mr. Churchill would have added to his reputation and probably won the election. But fate--and Lord Beaverbrook--decided otherwise....The least thinking wireless listerner must have noticed the contrast between Mr. Attlee's fair minded statement and Mr. Churchill's crudity....He has abandoned his position as a national leader to become the spokesman of a small unscrupulous group in his own party.[37]

Churchill's broadcasting (he did four of the ten allotted the Tories) was for the most part ill-advised and uninspired. He gave the Labour Party the chance to represent him as an irresponsible leader unfit for the task of ruling the country in time of peace. He could now be directly attacked.

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33 The Times, June 5, 1945, p. 4.
34 The Spectator, June 8, 1945, p. 515.
35 The Times, June 6, 1945, p. 2.
36 The Times, June 6, 1945, p. 6.
37 The New Statesman, June 9, 1945, p. 367.

Moreover, some of Mr. Churchill's leading supporters took up the theme of his first broadcast and went forth condemning socialism in the abstract, employing extravagant rhetoric, and ignoring the need to enunciate a positive alternative program of their own. The most active Tories in this connection were Mr. W. S. Morrison, Captain Harold Balfour, probably the most vehement speaker on either side, Mr. Brendan Bracken, Mr. Beverley Baxter, and the indefatigable Lord Beaverbrook. The press lord was so badly heckled, however, that much of what he tried to say was never heard in the hall in which he was speaking. There was a conscious attempt, as in Churchill's speech, to compare the methods of Fascism with those which would be used by the Labour Party if they won the election. As Captain Balfour said, "Mosley and Cripps have the same policy. The Socialist State of Cripps is to be the same as the Fascist state of the blackshirts."[38]

Mr. Churchill was much wiser in his second broadcast. He concentrated on the Conservative program and the superiority of Tory Democracy to Labour's State socialism:

> I am as much opposed to the creation of a complete Socialist system as I am in favor of immense social reforms....Equal opportunity for all, under free institutions and equal laws--there is the banner for which we will do battle against all rubber-stamp bureaucracies or dictatorships.

He was very definite on the housing crisis:

> It is on the provision of homes that all other plans which I have mentioned turn. Every method, public or private, for houses, permanent or temporary, will be employed, and all obstructions, from whatever quarter they come, be they price rings, monopolies or any other form of obstacle, will be dealt with by the whole power of Parliament.[39]

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[38] The Times, June 16, 1945, p. 2. [39] The Times, June 14, 1945, p. 4.

On June 21st Mr. Churchill went before the microphones for his third attempt to persuade the British people sitting by their hearths to give him a new mandate. Strangely, he returned with a vengeance to the sytle and content of his first, greatly criticized broadcast. The extravagance of his language makes embarrassing reading:

> ...some of the Socialist leaders...talk of violence to be used upon us if necessary to make us conform smartly and promptly to the benevolent ideas of these autocratic philanthropists....the violent imposition of the Socialistic system, such as has now emerged as a demand from the extreme and potentially dominant forces of the Socialist Party, would not only involve the restriction of Parliamentary government but would rob the ordinary wage-earner of his personal freedom....[40]

Herbert Morrison said that he thought it was "...very sad to see this undoubtedly brilliant wartime Prime Minister going to pieces in electoral debate,"[41] and this was typical of the reaction of the Labour Party and much of the press.

One of the most acrimonious, and at the same time arid elements in the electoral battle of 1945 centered on a statement made by the head of the Labour Party's National Executive, Mr. Harold Laski. He became a focal point of Tory attacks when he said that though Mr. Attlee should certainly accept Churchill's invitation to accompany him to the Potsdam Conference he should understand that his status was that of observer only and that he could not commit the Labour Party to any decision of the Conference. Though Attlee quickly repudiated the Laski statement, Tory speakers took it up and made it their main theme for the last part of the campaign. Lord Beaverbrook and Mr. Churchill vied with each other in trying to exploit the Laski affair as an example of what would happen if Labour received a majority. That is, Parliament

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[40] The Times, June 22, 1945, p. 4. [41] The Times, June 23, 1945, p. 2.

would be subordinated to the very left-leaning leaders of the National Executive. Speaking at Streatham Baths Lord Beaverbrook said,

> In fact the simple issue at this election is--Shall foreign policy be decided by the House of Commons or by the Laski Council? I hereby declare that Laski is aiming at the destruction of the Parliamentary system of Great Britain and that he hopes to set up in its place the dictatorship of something...called the National Executive.[42]

In his fourth broadcast Mr. Churchill said of Laski, "...he has shown himself the master of forces too strong for Mr. Attlee to challenge by any effective counter-action."[43] The way in which the Tories tried to exploit the Laski question left them open to serious charges of stunt electioneering. They had a legitimate minor issue which would have been good for a few day's play, but to make it a dominant electoral theme for over two weeks made it appear that they had nothing else to talk about. When they spoke of "Gauleiter Laski," or when they described Attlee as a"ventriloquist's dummy" sitting on Laski's knee, or when they depicted Professor Laski as a dangerous revolutionary ready to overthrow the established constitution, they exceeded the normal bounds of political propriety.[44] On the day of the poll The Times said, "...the most hardened electioneer might be astonished to find...how completely the closing days of the election have been dominated by the Laski affair.... the exploitation of Professor Laski's utterances energetically continued up to the eve of poll...invites cynical explanations."[45]

The extremely large radio audiences indicated that the electorate was paying attention to the campaign, but the numbers that turned out in person to see and hear the politicians proved disappointing. Speakers

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42 The Times, June 21, 1945, p. 4. 43 The Times, July 2, 1945, p. 8.
44 McCallum, p. 148. 45 The Times, July 5, 1945, p. 5.

came back from the provinces to report small but very interested audiences. The polls, not then taken too seriously, were predicting a heavy gain for Labour, but the political commentators generally wavered in their forecasts between a narrow and a substantial majority for the Tories.[46] It was not until Mr. Churchill set out on his remarkable electoral tour and began to mobilize the vast reserves of popularity and affection which were his, that the prophets were lured from their cautious estimates and came down on the side of a solid majority for the Conservative Party. In view of the enormous crowds and the enthusiastic demonstrations of loyalty that greeted Mr. Churchill's triumphal procession, it was simply not felt to be possible that this man could be rejected by the nation which seemed to love him so. The Times said, "If there ever existed any doubt about the continuing popularity of the Prime Minister among all classes in the country it was completely dissipated to-day. Throughout the whole length of his first day's tour... through the heart of the industrial Midlands his reception was tumultuous and overwhelming."[47] The next day, however, The Times commented with surer insight on one of the great crowds, "...this struck one as a largely unpolitical audience. It had turned out to do honour to the great leader who had seen them triumphantly through the war, and it was his allusions to the victory that evoked the warmest applause."[48] The Prime Minister struck at least one definite false note on his tour. At Aylesbury he said, "It is no use people thinking I can continue unless I have a great majority when I return to the House."[49] This had the smell of arrogance to it and some of the newspapers and Labour politicians took it up. Labour was somewhat querulous about the tour and Mr. Churchill's

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46 McCallum, pp. 153-56. 47 The Times, June 26, 1945, p. 5.

48 The Times, June 27, 1945, p. 4. 49 The Times, June 26, 1945, p. 2.

reception by the people. Mr. Ernest Bevin commented, "No man has the right to exploit the VE celebrations for party advantage."[50]

In sharp contrast to the tour of the provinces was Mr. Churchill's progression through various parts of London on July 2-3. The crowds were generally smaller than anticipated and there was some booing and heckling at most stops. His speech at Walthamstow Stadium in London on July 3rd was a distinctly bad performance. Churchill found himself confronted by an audience at least a thrid under the full-house estimate given to the press and in a very truculent mood. The Prime Minister reciprocated, and at times he found it impossible to continue with his speech.[51] After this meeting he told Virginia Cowles that he knew now that they were beaten. The next evening at Lewisham he made his final effort and it was not a very good one. Much of his speech was devoted to a bitter attack on his onetime Coalition Home Secretary, Mr. Herbert Morrison, who was contesting the constituency.[52]

In his last broadcast, on June 30th, Mr. Churchill was in a more mellow mood. He recalled the sacrifices and glories of the war years and gave thanks for the splendid loyalty which had been given him by all sections of the population. He told how he had been profoundly moved by the multitudes which had greeted him on his tour. He saw fit, however, to re-hash several of the tired issues of the campaign, including the reasons for the break-up of the Coalition, various Labour smears against him, and the Laski affair--the latter at some length.[53] The Times, in commenting on the broadcast said, "He did complain of the partisan fury in which the election had been fought, presumably unmindful that no one, save perhaps Captain Balfour, had been more partisan than he."[54]

50 McCallum, p. 157. 51 The Times, July 4, 1945, p. 4.
52 Ibid. 53 The Times, July 2, 1945, p. 8. 54 Ibid., p. 4.

Election day dawned warm and clear. The newspaper editorials on that day give some picture of the impact of the Tory effort. The Times was highly critical: "There can be no doubt about the shock to opinion administered by Mr. Churchill's first broadcast when he saw a Labour victory paving the way...to the establishment of a Gestapo...." The great newspaper felt that the Prime Minister had been mistaken to allow "...his fighting spirit...to lend itself to the stratagems of the electioneer...."[55] The Manchester Guardian was even more hostile in its evaluation: "This election is the most hateful in recent memory because this great leader...turned himself into a party leader who catches at any device for winning votes...hinting that unless they give him a tremendous majority he cannot serve...."[56] The Daily Herald showed its unapologetic left-wing bias in its leader on polling day:

> It was the secret society of financiers, industrialists, armament makers and speculators that assisted and upheld the regime of Hitler and Mussolini. That society is not defunct or even disbanded. Its British branch is praying to-day that Winston Churchill will beat the British working class at the polls.[57]

The Economist was positively scathing in its denunciation of Mr. Churchill's conduct of the campaign:

> ...on the national stage....the Labour Party has conducted its campaign with great dignity and good feeling, while the Conservatives have resorted to stunts, red herrings, and unfair practices to an extent that has disgusted many of their friends and followers--and if the truth could be told, most of their leaders outside the charmed circle. The constructive moderation of Mr. Eden, Mr. Butler, and Sir John Anderson has, with the Prime Minister's active help, been overridden by the circus....It begins to look as if the Conservative Party is unwilling ever to win an election on its merits....Churchill's behaviour in this election has made it finally impossible for him to serve as the rallying point for a truly national policy of social and economic regeneration.[58]

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55 The Times, July 5, 1945, p. 5. 56 Schuyler and Ausubel, p. 660.

57 McCallum, p. 193. 58 The Economist, July 7, 1945, p. 2.

The Conservative campaign had pleased few of the most responsible journals of the nation. For a Tory Prime Minister of Mr. Churchill's fame to get a slap on the wrist from The Times on polling day was a very bad sign.

The results of the 1945 General Election were not known for twenty-one days so that the forces' vote could be gathered in. Shortly after 10 a. m. on July 26th the first result came in. It was South Salford and it was a gain for Labour. By 10:25 a. m. the first Cabinet Minister fell. Mr. Harold Macmillan was out at Stockton-on-Tees by 9,000 votes. The B. B. C. news to the forces at 11:00 a. m. forecast that the Conservative membership might be reduced to a figure not much above 100. The news was not going to be quite that bad, however. The final results as compiled by McCallum and Readman were:

Pro-Government:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Conservative Party..... | 8,665,566..... | 189 seats | --a loss of 172 |
| Ulster Unionists..... | 392,454..... | 9 seats | |
| Nationals..... | 142,906..... | 2 seats | --a loss of 7 |
| Liberal Nationals..... | 749,883..... | 13 seats | --a loss of 14 |
| | 9,950,809 | 213 | |

Anti-Government:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Labour Party..... | 11,992,292..... | 393 seats | --a gain of 227 |
| Independent Labour Party... | 46,679..... | 3 seats | |
| The Common Wealth Party.... | 110,634..... | 1 seat | |
| Communist Party..... | 102,780..... | 2 seats | |
| Scottish Nationalists..... | 30,595..... | 0 seats | |
| Irish Nationalists..... | 148,078..... | 2 seats | |
| The Liberal Party..... | 2,239,668..... | 12 seats | |
| | 14,670,726 | 413 seats | |

There were fourteen seats won by Independents, the majority of whom were allied with the Conservative Party.

Churchill's appeal to the electorate was answered by only two-fifths and rejected by a large majority. This may indeed be called a crushing and decisive defeat, worthy of the great awe in which it has since been

held. It was the first time in modern British History that a Government which had carried the country through a victorious war was rejected in its appeal for a new mandate.

The explanation of the Tory debacle began as soon as the results were in and opinion has fairly well crystallized as to the reasons. Perhaps there was little that the masters of the Conservative Party could have done to prevent the Labour victory, but they might have mitigated the landslide and reduced it to less humiliating proportions. It is always difficult to say how much effect the campaign activity itself has on the outcome. It is probably less that the politicians and commentators believe. Perhaps even Churchill's disastrous broadcasting tactics changed few votes. Platform speeches are normally attended by the already convinced rather than those seeking reasons why they should vote for one side or the other. Such audiences would be small in relation to the total electorate. It is probably a fact that the independent, non-affiliated voters make up their minds over a long period of time and are little affected by the quirks and quips of the campaign period. It is likely that the great middle of the British electorate weighed Tory policy and performance in the inter-war period and found it seriously wanting. They were therefore unwilling to trust them with another reconstruction. The Labour leaders were attractive and reasonable men who had proved their abilities in the Coalition. Labour had received the stamp of respectability; and could anyone really see Mr. Attlee as a dictator? From all accounts the forces' vote was strongly pro-Labour. This was a factor which the Conservatives had not apparently sufficiently considered. Several explanations can be advanced for the way the servicemen voted. There must have been a

strong temptation to register a protest against all the difficulties and irritations of military life. The Tory candidates represented the ruling class, therefore they could serve as surrogates for the powers of the military establishment. Also, the men in uniform knew the price which had been paid in the first three years of the war for military unpreparedness. The Conservative Party was charged in their view, with having pursued a policy which led to a war for which they had not prepared the nation. Being abroad the men had been somewhat insulated from the glamor of Mr. Churchill. It has been said that the touring lecturers who visited bases during the war were predominantly left-wing. Lastly, the servicemen would be foremost among those seeking a better life in Britain after the war. Labour appeared to have the best policy to insure fair shares for all in post-war Britain. Some of the men believed, no doubt, that Mr. Churchill might get the nation in another war before the current one was completed.

The Conservatives might have won a narrow victory, or at least have prevented the huge Labour majority by articulating a forward-looking policy for the re-building of the nation and appearing really to mean it; but this could hardly have been improvised on the spot. They would have had to start talking about such a policy from the time when victory appeared certain. The time was simply not right in 1945 for an old-fashioned political campaign. The indulgence in stunts, personalities, and assorted irrelevancies was foolish in the atmosphere of 1945. The one great asset of the Tories, Mr. Churchill, was recklessly squandered and debased in a manner which a political novice could have advised against. Mr. Churchill's personal prestige could

have been exploited for party advantage by presenting him as a statesman, virtually above party, who had won the victory by utilizing all the best elements in British political life, and who would preserve the peace and re-build the shattered fragments of British society in the same way.

The Times made it clear that Mr. Churchill must bear a large part of the blame for his party's defeat:

> Mr. Churchill himself introduced and insisted upon emphasizing the narrow animosities of the party fight....the voters who were deeply interested in real, urgent, and essentially non-party issues such as the housing of the people, seem to have visited their disappointment on the side which appeared to show only a perfunctory interest in the reconstruction programme; and who relied for success rather upon charges against the...misconduct of their opponents than upon any creative virtues of their own.[59]

The Economist concurred with this judgment but perhaps expressed it better:

> Though its dimensions are surprising, the causes of this overturn are not far to seek. For years past, the electorate has shown by every means open to it under the political truce that it was tired of the Tories. Their pre-war record has not been forgotten....
>
> The only thing that could have checked this trend would have been an attempt by the Prime Minister to put his personal prestige; and his personal promise, behind a drastic and far-reaching programme of Tory Reform. In view of what happened on July 5th, even this could hardly have secured a Tory majority. But, with the exception of a single broadcast more than two years ago, Mr. Churchill has been consistently contemptuous towards the need for reform. And in the election campaign, so far from raising the Tory stock, it is now clear that he lowered it.... the epitaph on him must be that Lord Baldwin would have done far better.[60] (my italics)

The Spectator said that "A large slice of the British public had been deeply anti-Conservative by 1939. Nothing has happened between 1939 and 1945 to lessen that antipathy....The coupon election...has proved

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59 The Times, July 27, 1945, p. 4.

60 The Economist, July 28, 1945, p. 105.

to be a blessing in disguise. It would have been dangerous not to have unearthed such widespread discontent."[61] McCallum and Readman felt that the Tory defeat was unastonishing, "Their sudden fall is less surprising that it might seem on the surface. During the years 1918 to 1939 they had held on to power by narrow margins of support in the country as a whole and were never to attract as many as half the votes of the electorate, when they stood alone."[62]

The Election of 1945, like the events of 1688, 1832, 1867, and 1911, was a great political and social milestone in British history. Another bloodless revolution had been wrought. In modern times the Conservative Party had never been one to refuse to adjust itself to the political climate. In the aftermath of 1945 the Tories re-examined their organization, policy, and tactics. Complacency was banished. In attempting to prevent a long period of decline encrusted Toryism was swept from public view. In the short run at least, the lessons of 1945 were not misread. The repudiation of the Conservative Party in 1945 was by no means unprecedented; nor, for that matter, was its speedy recovery. In 1832 the Tories had badly misjudged the climate of opinion, but under Sir Robert Peel they came into line with the times. Disraeli and Lord Randolph Churchill tried much the same thing after the defeats of 1868 and 1880. The years 1945-51 proved that the Conservative Party had not lost its old resiliency and realism under the prod of defeat.

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61 McCallum, p. 266.

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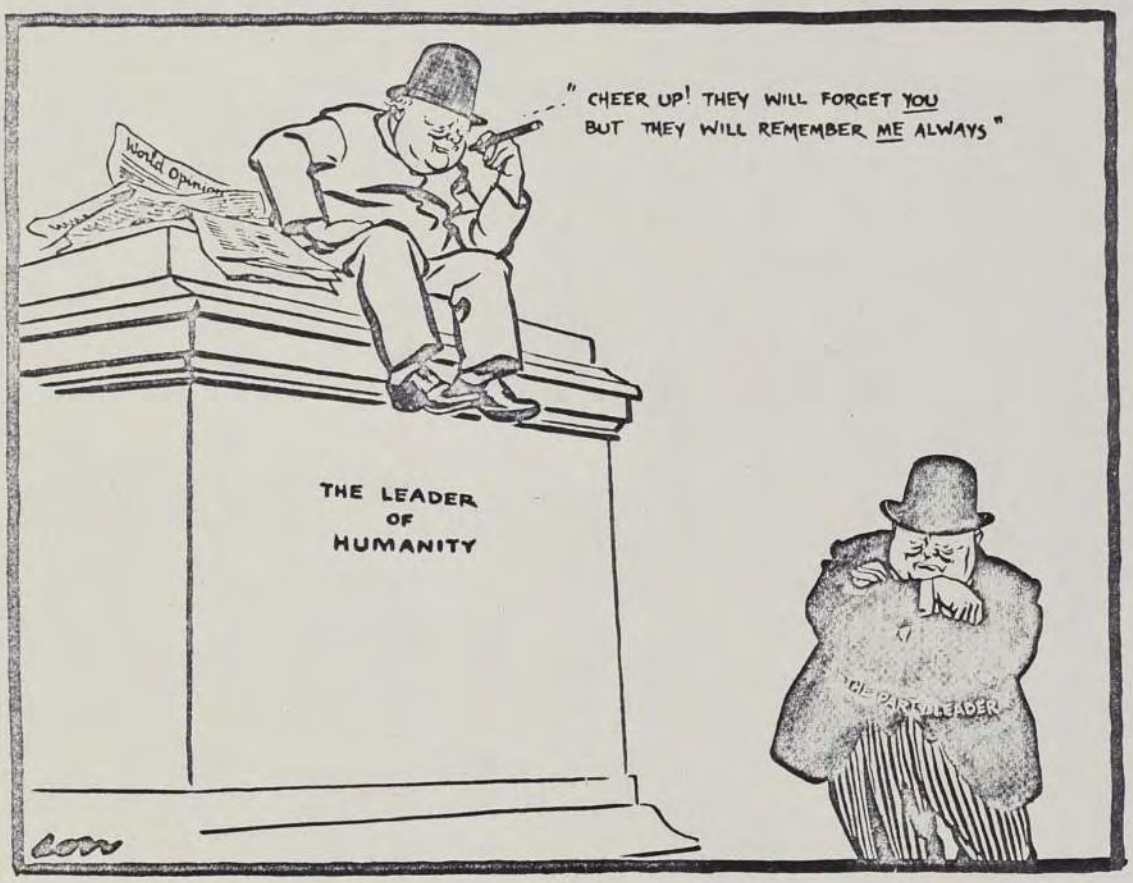


TWO CHURCHILLS

NEWS CHRONICLE 27th July 1945

# CHAPTER II

## THE PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

The Conservative Party had been the dominant political force in Great Britain since 1918. It had chosen to sustain Lloyd George and Ramsay MacDonald even when their own followers were deserting them in droves. Now, on the eve of total victory against all of His Majesty's enemies, the Tories found themselves in the unfamiliar and unheroic role of the loyal Opposition. This chapter will examine their reactions to the challenges and difficulties of this new role and assess how well they used the opportunities it afforded in their drive to win the next election.

Harry Boardman, the long-time correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, has described brilliantly the opening of the 1945 Parliament:

> ...a wild commotion runs along the Opposition benches. The Tory members are rising. Hands raised aloft, they are cheering. It is a cheer so vehement as to be violent. The Labour masses are silent. And then into one's field of vision, looking downward to the floor, is projected the head with the swell at the temples so indicative of mental power and the Atlantean shoulders of Mr. Churchill. He has come. He is not going to sulk in his tent or just paint at Westerham--who started that ...story? He is to lead the Opposition. It is a feat of enormous importance for the future.[1]

The fierce cheering soon modulated itself into song. The Tories began to sing "For he's a jolly good fellow." Labour was not to be outdone. In answer to what they took to be a challenge they ~~answered with~~ SANG the "Red Flag."

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[1] Harry Boardman, The Glory of Parliament (London, 1960), pp. 124-25.

Mr. Churchill was nearing seventy-one years when he received the news of his unexpected reversal of fortune. The sixth volume of his war memoirs, written a number of years after the brutal rejection of 1945, contains, at the very end, a passage which reveals the bitter state of his mind, "...the verdict of the electors had been so overwhelmingly expressed that I did not wish to remain even for an hour responsible for their affairs."[2] In his formal message to the nation he chose the method of a terse press release: "The decision of the British people has been recorded in the votes counted to-day. I have therefore laid down the charge which was placed upon me in darker times. I regret that I have not been permitted to finish the work against Japan."[3] A number of people have recalled how Churchill took his repudiation, but they differ widely. A guest invited to what was supposed to be a victory celebration with the Churchill family, but which turned out to be an agonizing post mortem has described the great man as speechless, morose, and in tears.[4] Lord Moran has recently described him as tearful and terribly depressed.[5] However, Oliver Lyttelton, his old friend, says that Churchill was certainly more cheerful than most on the day of his party's defeat. He quotes him as having said, "They won't last forever....We shall return. We shall return, as sure as the sun arises...."[6] Author Robin Maugham has him very downcast and saying, "...it will be strange on the morrow when the great affairs of State are no longer brought to me. But I have no regrets....I leave my name to history."[7]

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2 Winston S. Churchill, Triumph and Tragedy (Boston, 1953), p. 675.

3 Ibid.

4 Virginia Cowles, No Cause For Alarm (New York, 1949), p. 74.

5 Lord Moran, "Diaries of Churchill's Doctor, Part I," Life Magazine (April 22, 1966), pp. 109-10.

6 Oliver Lyttelton (Viscount Chandos), The Memoirs of Lord Chandos (New York, 1963), p. 315.

7 Churchill, The Life Triumphant (New York, 1965), p. 134.

Defeat and rejection were not new to Mr. Churchill in 1945. He did not let the event destroy his public composure, and he was punctilious in observing the decorum which was expected of him. Perhaps he had himself in mind when, in The Gathering Storm, he quote Plutarch on the subject of Clemenceau's political defeat after World War I:

> In the fear, anger, and disarray of the French people, the rugged, dominating figure of Clemenceau, with his world-famed authority, and his special British and American contacts, was incontinently discarded. 'Ingratitude towards their great men,' says Plutarch, 'is the mark of strong peoples.' It was imprudent for France to indulge this trait when she was so grievously weakened.[8]

He supposedly felt the temptation to retire gracefully after 1945 "...in an odour of civic freedoms."[9] It would not have been considered amiss for him to retire to the dignity of the House of Lords with a dukedom and the garter, and leave the active leadership of his party to Eden, whose reputation stood high. We are led to believe that there were elements in the Conservative Party who would have welcomed such a decision.[10] Perhaps a reflection of his feelings on this subject can be found in his reply to the editor of The Times, who had suggested that Churchill should maintain a statesmanlike aloofness to the purely party fight of the Election of 1945. In a characteristic remark Churchill said, "I fight for my corner and I leave when the pub closes." When it was suggested after the defeat that he undertake a tour of Britain he said, "I refuse to be exhibited like a prize bull whose chief attraction is its past prowess."[11]

There is no way to know whether Churchill seriously entertained the idea of an early retirement, but it is clear that his role as Leader of His Majesty's Opposition did little to enhance his historical reputation.

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[8] Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Boston, 1948), p. 12.

[9] Lewis Broad, Winston Churchill, The Years of Achievement (New York, 1963), p. 520.

[10] Lord Moran, p. 110. [11] Cowles, p. 74.

Lewis Broad, who wrote a good but largely laudatory biography of Churchill, felt that he was less than outstanding in this new phase of his career: "It was not the ideal position for the exercise of his talents."[12] He was often absent from the House, and he apparently did not always see to the proper co-ordination of the Parliamentary efforts of his party. To score points off the party in power an Opposition Leader must be constant and patient in his attendence. The speeches of other men, particularly the outpourings of backbenchers, were never greatly to Churchill's taste. He was essentially a talker rather than a listener. There were so many things to distract him: his memoirs, his hobbies, his vacations, and his frequent forays on the world stage as the high constable of the West or godfather to the union of Europe. Moreover, he was frequently ill in this period. J. D. Hoffman makes it quite clear in his book that he does not believe Churchill was a very effective Opposition Leader.[13] In his view, it was providential for the Tories that Churchill turned increasingly to other pursuits, thus leaving the active conduct of the Opposition to Eden "...and his moderate colleagues."[14] This is Hoffman's view of Churchill:

> He was essentially an individualist, speaking from the Conservative front bench almost incidentally as a party leader.... Sporadic appearances in the House, indifference to the consolidation of party effort, and occasionally outright disregard for the views of his shadow cabinet colleagues imposed strains upon the Conservative Party which from time to time seriously affected the quality of opposition.[15]

In his great Parliamentary set pieces Churchill bombarded the Government with grandiose bombast, but this was not the kind of thing which would win concessions from a Government with a two-to-one majority. Having

12 Broad, p. 519. 13 J. D. Hoffman, The Conservative Party in Opposition, 1945-51 (London, 1964), p. 232, p. 241, pp. 266-69.

14 Ibid., p. 268.

15 Ibid., pp. 268-69.

discharged his thunder, he too often, apparently, departed the confines of Westminster leaving lesser mortals in charge. With Stanley Baldwin there was no thunder and little bombast. Many Conservatives have, however, thought him the very model of an effective party leader.[16]

It is a difficult historical problem to attempt a determination of the success or failure of a parliamentary opposition in modern times. Labour's strength was so overwhelming as to be considered invincible except on some unforseen issue involving the fate of the nation. Given the discipline of the modern British political party over its members, it was unthinkable that the Government could be defeated or forced to resign in the normal course of things. The opportunities for an opposition party to exert any significant influence on legislation are strictly limited. A brilliantly delivered harangue of the Government's policy by Churchill might have--often did have--the desired impact on the Press Gallery and filled columns in the newspapers, but within the narrower parliamentary context, the speech might be regarded, even by some members of his own shadow cabinet, as an extravagant and perhaps embarrassing display of rhetoric, whose contribution would only unite a divided government policy, or stiffen the Treasury Bench against concessions.[17] A conciliatory or bi-partisan approach to a piece of essentially agreed [upon] legislation might lead to the acceptance by the Government of a number of amendments. This would be particularly true during the committee stages of uncontroversial bills. However, the effect of such an approach might well lead to charges of impotence from the party faithful or the backbench contingent. Vigorous opposition and effective opposition are,

16 Ibid., p. 268. 17 Ibid., p. 222.

then, by no means one-and-the-same. Ideally, a well conducted opposition would be vigorous enough to keep up the morale of the party, in Parliament and in the country; responsible enough to maintain the respect of the serious press and fair minded men in and out of politics; and helpful enough to extract valuable concessions from the Government. Judged by these rigorous standards the Conservative Party in Opposition was no grand success. It must be stated, however, that the record of any opposition is bound to be somewhat negative. Compared with the factionalism of the Labour opposition in the 1950's the Tory record is a shining one. Some commentators have even suggested, looking back, that it was the very model of a good opposition.[18]

Mr. Churchill's first speech from the Opposition Front Bench was a study in moderation. "Here and there," he said, "there may be differences of emphasis or view, but in the main no Parliament every assembled with such a mass of agreed legislation,..."[19] Had he adhered to such a notion he might have enhanced his own and his party's reputation and caused the Government to take him into its confidence and accept his view in certain matters. R. A. Butler spoke in an equally conciliatory manner, stressing the continuity between the proposals contained in the speech from the Throne and those which had been framed in the last years of the Coalition. Anthony Eden established the framework for a bi-partisan foreign policy which was to hold basically until the last year of Labour's tenure.[20] Many times in the years that followed Churchill spoke of the fundamental harmony between much of the Labour program and policies enunciated under his leadership during the war; but he so conducted

18 Bernard Crick, "Two Theories of Opposition," The New Statesman, June 18, 1960, pp. 882-883.

19 Hoffman, pp. 226-27. 20 Ibid., p. 227.

the Opposition and so fashioned his speeches that the Conservative Party was made to appear more reactionary than was, considering the work of policy re-definition being carried on by R. A. Butler at the Research Office, the actual case.

The Tories were not accustomed to being the Opposition and it took them a while to adjust. In November, 1945 there were mutterings in the ranks of backbenchers that the party leadership was not showing sufficient vigor. When, through an oversight, the leadership did not see to it that an amendment was tabled at the proper time opposing the nationalization of gas, electricity, and transport, criticism turned to anger and frustration. It was thought that Churchill and Eden were absent from the House too much and that they were allowing other matters to distract them from the unremitting tasks of opposition. A meeting of the "1922 Committee" was convened to thrash the issue out. Both Churchill and Eden addressed the backbenchers and promised that in the future, one of them would always be present for important business in the House. It was implied that a more vigorous opposition would follow; but periodically in the years that followed, the charge would be renewed, either in the press, or in the conclaves of the Conservative Party, that the parliamentary opposition was inefficient, ineffective, lackadaisical, or lackluster. Undoubtedly, many of these complaints originated in frustration, particularly as by-election after by-election failed to reveal a single Tory gain. Churchill could give the discontented Tory lions oratorical red meat only--he could not win divisions or by-elections for them.

By March, 1946 the Conservative Party had organized fifteen committees, assisted by the newly created Parliamentary Secretariat. These were

designed to develop the lines of policy and tactics in various important subjects. Tory M. P.'s could now be given professional assistance, rivalling, though not, of course, equalling that available to Government spokesmen, in the preparation of their speeches. The Secretariat and the parliamentary policy committees would together give a greater consistency and depth to the Conservative Opposition. Here was one of the surer ways to have an effective counterweight to the Government in the House of Commons. This, in addition to the development of new policy ideas at the Research Department, would help ease the sting of the old taunt which is flung at all opposition parties: "Well, what would your alternative be?

The economic difficulties of the country provided the Conservative Party with a continuous theme for exploitation, but here was the area where a convincing alternative policy was most difficult to develop--without appearing to be an enemy of the Welfare State and full employment. Opposition to a Government with an overwhelming majority in a time of acute national adversity was full of snares and pitfalls.

For the first two years of the Parliament of 1945, the problems of the Indian Empire were of such a critical nature that they compelled the most serious attention. This was an area where the most hardened prejudices of Mr. Churchill were found. It is said that his colleagues always felt a little nervousness whenever he rose to speak on India, and considering some of the remarks which he made in this connection in the years 1945-47, they had a right to be. He remained the chieftain of the diehards; and, in public at least, he appeared to carry most of his party with him. On August 15, 1945, in the speech from the throne, the Government made very clear its determination to give self-government

to India at the earliest possible time. In February, 1946 it sent out a Cabinet Mission with the hope that it could bring about an understanding between the various contending forces and hasten the creation of a constituent assembly and an interim government. Little came of this, however, and violent encounters between Muslims and Hindus spread to many parts of the country, and relations between the two sects became more embittered. At this critical juncture, February 20, 1947, Attlee announced that Lord Mountbatten was being sent out as the new Viceroy and that June of 1948 was the date beyond which Britain would not remain responsible for the government of India. Mountbatten quickly realized that partition was inevitable and that June, 1948, far from being too soon a date for withdrawal, was too remote. By June 3, 1947 he had, in truly masterly fashion, secured agreement among the leaders for a plan of partition, and had set August 15th as the date for the transfer of power. The mutually expressed feelings of goodwill which surrounded that event and the subsequent good relations between Britain and India have caused the granting of independence to the sub-continent to be regarded as one of the great achievements of the Labour Party. Had Churchill been responsible for these events he might have produced, judging from his speeches, the fatal misunderstanding which could have ended in chaos and horror.

Against this background of events as they unfolded in India it is now my purpose to show the reaction of Mr. Churchill and his party to them. One of his continuous themes was the contention that the Indian politicians did not represent the wishes or best interests of the masses. He advanced this idea on July 18, 1946 in a debate on the proposals of the Cabinet Mission,[21] and he enlarged upon this theme in

[21] Randolph Churchill (ed.), The Sinews of Peace, The Speeches of Winston Churchill (Boston, 1949), p. 177.

the debate on Indian affairs in December, 1946:

> I do not believe in the perversion of the will of the people by actively organised...minorities, who, have seized upon power by force or fraud or chicane, come forward and then use that power in the name of vast masses with whom they have long lost all effective connection....A decision is to be taken as a result of which the British connection with India will come to an end. I am not at all admitting that that decision represents the wish or expression of the people of India.[22]

Churchill persisted in his belief that outside the politically articulate groups of India there remained a strong residue of loyalty to the crown and a disinclination to see the British depart.

In March, 1947 there was a full-dress debate on Attlee's time limit proposal. Churchill began his speech by proclaiming that "Great Britain had been for many years committed to handing over responsibility for the Government of India to representatives of the Indian people."[23] He went on to discuss the proposals of the Cripps' Mission of 1942, which he had sent out with a very generous offer to the nationalists, and he quoted his own words at the time, "The broad principles of the declaration made by His Majesty's Government, which formed the basis of the Lord Privy Seal's [Cripps] trip to India, must be taken as representing the settled policy of the British Crown and Parliament."[24] Apparently, Mr. Churchill said this to establish his personal commitment to Indian independence at some future date and under certain conditions. These remarks served as a basis for his attack on the time limit, which, he claimed, violated the spirit of the previous constitutional measures enacted for India. To Churchill's mind the announced intention of the Labour Government to withdraw by an established date was irresponsible

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22 Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), Fifth Series, 431, cols. 1367-68. (Hereafter I will use Hansard.)

23 Hansard, 434, col. 664. 24 Ibid., col. 666.

in the face of events in India, unmindful of what might exist in India in the future, and constituted an abandonment of promises repeatedly made to protect the minorities, the Princes, and the "Depressed Classes." He went on to attack the Interim Government of India which had been established by the Cabinet Mission of 1946:

> This Government of Mr. Nehru has been a complete disaster, and a great disintegration and demoralisation in the already weakened departmental machinery of the Government of India has followed from it. Thirty or forty thousand people have been slaughtered....Corruption is growing apace. They talk of giving India freedom. But freedom has been restricted since this Interim Nehru Government has come to power.[25]

Speaking of Lord Mountbatten he said, "I do not think that the 14 months' time limit gives the new Viceroy a fair chance....Is he to make a new effort to restore the situation, or is it merely Operation Scuttle.... Everyone knows that the...time limit is fatal to and orderly transfer of power...."[26] He then picked up one of his old themes in a strong attack on the Indian leaders:

> Let the House remember this. The Indian political parties and political classes do not represent the Indian masses. It is a delusion to believe they do....In handing over the Government of India to these so-called political classes we are handing over to men of straw, of whom, in a few years no trace will remain.[27] (my italics)

Churchill described the time limit "...as the complete adoption of one of Mr. Gandhi's most scatterbrained observations."[28] To illustrate how scatterbrained Gandhi was, he quoted from a statement made by the Mahatma on May 24, 1942, "Leave India in God's hands, in modern parlance, to anarchy; and that anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for a time, or to unrestricted dacoities. From these a true India will arise in place of the false one we see."[29] He concluded his very long oration

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25 Hansard, 434, col. 669. 26 Ibid., col. 671.

27 Ibid., col. 674. He later said that he did not include Nehru in this group of "men of straw."

28 Ibid. 29 Ibid.

on a typical note, evoking the memories of a long career:

> I have spoken with a lifetime of thought and contact with these topics. It is with deep grief I watch the clattering down of the British Empire with all its glories and all the services it has rendered to mankind....But, at least, let us not add--by shameful flight, by a premature, hurried scuttle--...to the pangs of sorrow so many of us feel, the taint and smear of shame.[30]

The comment of The Times was, "In a crowded Chamber he made it clear with a wealth of sonorous and vivid phrases, that his Party disclaimed all responsibility for the consequences of that policy, and there was a note of prophetic solemnity in his voice when he forecast what those consequences would be."[31] Certainly, history has shown that he was correct in many of his ominous predictions. The road for independent India has been extraordinarily hard; but Mr. Churchill did not, in this or in subsequent speeches, present any alternative which promised India or Britain a lighter burden or an easier way. Considering the perilous situation existing in India at the time, his speech was unstatesmanlike. It could only do harm in the circumstances--however, much it might comfort the Tory right-wing. He had fallen below the level of events. This is one example, and there are many in the period 1945-51, where the master of words became their slave.

In his reply, Attlee raked the Leader of the Opposition with that special brand of understated, exquisitely subtle abuse which was uniquely his own. He spoke of how little anyone could ever know about India, and how fast one's knowledge got out-of-date, "I quite recognise that I am out of date myself," he said, "...therefore I hesitate to be dogmatic or prophetic about what may happen in India....In this I admit, I differ from the Leader of the Opposition. I think his practical acquaintance

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[30] Hansard, 434, col. 678. [31] The Times, March 7, 1947, p. 4.

with India ended some fifty years ago. He formed very strong opinions--I might almost say prejudices--then....I have heard him reiterate these views over a period of years with a constancy that completely ignores the march of events."[32]

Though it has often been said that Churchill's views on India were out-of-step with progressive sentiment within his own party, we find that in the March, 1947 debate on the time limit virtually every leading Conservative spokesman, including Eden and Butler, echoed their Leader's objections. The House divided in support of the Government's policy 337 to 185,[33] but virtually every Tory M. P. followed Churchill into the nay lobby, whereas in many other divisions, where Conservative devotion to free enterprise was at stake, the dissenting vote was considerably less, in some instances much less. This does not mean, certainly, that the Conservative Party was against independence for India. The time limit was a bold and risky gambit, and objections to it could be easily justified. The fact that it worked out well does not mean that the Tories were wrong in complaining that it would tie the hands of the new Viceroy or, perhaps, produce disaster. Or, it may have been a case of yielding to Churchill's insistence that they put up a big fight on the question. We must always bear in mind, when studying the Conservative Party, the reminder of R. T. McKenzie, "...the Conservative Party even in opposition, places few...formal restraints on the authority of its Leader."[34]

Lord Mountbatten came to India armed with immense reserves of charm, tact, and energy. He put on a prodigious display of their effect in working out, and securing agreement, with three months of his arrival,

32 Hansard, 434, col. 764. 33 Ibid., col. 772.

34 R. T. McKenzie, The British Political Parties (London, 1955), p. 55. His second and third chapters provide a considerable enlargement on this theme.

a plan for the partition of India and the granting of independence on August 15, 1947. This must stand as one of the miracles of modern statecraft. When, on June 3rd, this was revealed to the House of Commons for its approval, Mr. Churchill was at last equal to the occasion. All of the oratorical shibboleths, which he normally dredged up in the discussion of Indian affairs, were put aside. He said, "...while reserving our full freedom to discuss points of detail, we shall not oppose any Bills to confer Dominion status on the various parts of India....If the hopes which are enshrined in this Declaration should be borne out, great credit will be due, not only to the Viceroy but to the Prime Minister...."[35]

The Burmese situation was, if anything, more difficult for Great Britain than that which prevailed in India, due to the fact that Burma had been under Japanese occupation for almost three years and great fighting had taken place in that unhappy province. The returning British military and administrative personnel found not only a ravaged country, but what amounted to a revolutionary situation. The Burmese nationalists were not prepared to see British sovereignty re-established. Mr. Churchill refused to admit the need or the desirability of granting independence to Burma. His words and predictions were even more melancholy in the case of Burma than they were for India. In a typically Churchillian oration he entirely dissociated himself and his party from the decision to grant independence to Burma and the terrible consequences which would flow from it:

> Burma is a pendant of India and is likely to reproduce...the horrors and disasters which have overspread her great neighbour and which should ever haunt the consciences of the principal actors in this tragedy....We stand on the threshold of another scene of misery and ruin....I say this to the Government: You shall bear that burden. By your fruits you will be judged. We shall have no part or lot in it....We, at least,

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35 Hansard, 438, cols. 42-3.

> will not be compromised or disgraced by taking part in them, or denied the opportunity of pointing the moral to the British nation...when the occasion may occur.[36]

He was, as we now know, even more wrong about the course which events would take in Burma than he was about the prospects of India.

Mr. Churchill was astounded and outraged when the Prime Minister announced in May, 1946 that he intended to withdraw, in the near future, all British forces from Egypt. Attlee remarked that such an announcements of good intentions was necessary because of Egyptian suspicions. According to Churchill, "The only sentiment that the Egyptians should permit themselves...is...gratitude....She was saved by the Armies of the British Empire from all the horrors which have racked the whole of Europe and large parts of Asia."[37] He argued passionately that the Government should hold fast to the Treaty of 1936 whereby Britain had the right to maintain forces in the Canal Zone. Churchill thought it was "...a strange thing to call upon brave soldiers to travel thousands of miles...to fight for great strategic objectives, all well-defined and fully declared, and then to turn around immediately afterwards, and discredit...those...objectives."[38] Ironically, negotiations broke down between the British and Egyptian Governments with the result that the British forces were not withdrawn until the Tories had returned to power.

Mr. Churchill was an unrepentant and unapologetic imperialist in every instance save Palestine. Here he wanted the British mandate speedily terminated in favor of a Jewish national home with immigration up to the full absorptive capacity.[39] He wished also to enlist the help and active collaboration of France and the United States in achieveing ~~three~~

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36 Randolph Churchill (ed.), Europe Unite, The Speeches of Winston S. Churchill 1947 and 1948 (Boston, 1950), pp. 194-95.

37 Churchill, Sinews of Peace, p. 150. 38 Ibid., p. 150.

39 Ibid., p. 143.

these aims.[40] Here he was ahead of and wiser than the Government. Churchill thought it quite astonishing that the Prime Minister should be prepared to

> ...place the independence of India in hostile and feeble hands, heedless of the dark carnage and confusion which will follow. We scuttle from Egypt....we abandon the Canal Zone about which our treaty rights...are indefeasible; but now, apparently, the one place where we are at all costs and at all inconveniences to hold on and fight it out to the death is Palestine....[41]

The British mandate for Palestine was terminated on May 15, 1948 with the United States in protective attendance. Lewis Broad believesthat Churchill played a large role in leading the Government to accept this way out of the impasse.[42] This was perhaps the only instance where his views on foreign and imperial policy produced any real effect.

It will be remembered that Mr. Churchill had said in August, 1945 that "...in the main no Parliament ever assembled with such a mass of agreed upon legislation...." This was not convincing, however, when the Tories fought the National Health Service Bill. Because the measure was known to be popular, it was important for the Conservatives to watch carefully their response to the Labour proposals. "Instead," according to Hoffman, "poor leadership and the absence of a coherent alternative policy allowed the party to drift into a reactionary posture and become the mouthpiece of the vested interests lined up in opposition to the bill." The party placed itself in the position of "...seeming to oppose the principle of National Health--a postion which they spent the next four years denying."[43] I cannot agree with Hoffman on this. A careful reading of Hansard will show that the Tory arguments were not couched in reactionary language, and I have never come across any Labour charge

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40 Ibid., p. 143. 41 Ibid., pp. 195-96. 42 Broad, p. 525.
43 Hoffman, p. 235.

that the Tories opposed National Health; nor any Conservative argument denying that they opposed it. However, it might have been better tactics, as the Bill was sure of passage in any form which Labour wanted, to have cavilled as little as possible. National Health would have been a good subject for enthusiastic bi-partisanship.

On July 26, 1946, the Conservatives moved to deny the Bill a third reading. They were, however, very careful to state that they welcomed a comprehensive health service. They objected to a Bill "...which discourages voluntary effort and association; mutilates the structure of local government; dangerously increases Ministerial power and patronage; appropriates trust funds...in contempt of the wishes of the donors.... and undermines the freedom and independence of the medical profession...."[44] Mr. Willink, a former official of the Ministry of Health, was the chief Conservative spokesman in this debate. He tried to make it very clear that his party objected to the Bill only in detail and not in principle: "...when we say we wish this Bill well we mean that we hope the comprehensive health service to which we were pledged as much as the party opposite will not be retarded, or frustrated, by what we regard as the vices of this Bill."[45] On the question of giving the Health Bill and third and final reading, the House divided 261 to 113.[46] This would appear to indicate that the Conservative Party did not have its heart in the objections which it put forward.

Mr. Churchill took no part at all in the debate over National Health inside the House, but in a speech delivered outside he sang his usual song on how much he was devoted to the great schemes of social security and how they had been hatched under his leadership and patronage: "I

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[44] Hansard, 426, col. 398. This is from the Conservative motion.
[45] Ibid., col. 458. [46] Ibid., col. 474.

have worked at national insurance schemes almost all my life and am responsible for some of the largest measures ever passed....The main principles of the new health schemes were hammered out in the coalition days before the party and personal malignancy of Mr. Bevan plunged health policy into its present confusion."[47]

The winter of 1947 was a cruel one for Britain. To the harshness of the weather was added a great shortage of coal, and subsequently of power. Many factories were forced to shut down and the publication of newspapers and periodicals was greatly curtailed. In March, Britain was struck by snow storms of almost unprecedented size, and these were followed by disastrous floods. It was in this context that a full-scale debate took place in the House of Commons on the economic crisis facing the nation. The Tories put down a motion of no confidence. Mr. Churchill was in the vanguard with a blistering attack on the Labour Government:

> ...they deemed it their mission to impose their particular ideological formulas and theories upon...their fellow-countrymen....This was a crime against the British State and people, the consequences of which have hampered our recovery, darkened our future and now endanger our very life....mouthing slogans of envy, hatred and malice, they have spread class warfare throughout the land....In less than two years, our country, under their control, has fallen from its proud and glorious position...to the plight in which it lies this afternoon.... That is their offence...with the guilt and discredit of which their name and the doctrines of their party will long be identified.[48]

The remedy, as usual, was lower government spending, reduced taxation, and fewer controls. Some money could be saved, he suggested, by eliminating the £120 millions a year being spent in Germany "...trying to solve their problems when we cannot solve our own;" and the £85m a year being squandered in Palestine "...for the sake of a senseless,

[47] Broad, p. 522. [48] Hansard, 426, cols. 1322-34.

squalid war with the Jews in order to give Palestine to the Arabs, or God knows who."[49] Further, he felt that there was outrageous expenditure and waste in the civil service, which, he added, was no longer civil. There was also extravagance in the military departments, particularly in relation to the actual fighting potential of the services. He disliked the way the American loan was being spent. Too much of it was being spent for frivolous things like tobacco and films and too little on plant re-equipment. Mr. Churchill's speech was long and powerful, but in castigating the Government for the imposition of "their particular ideological formulas" he was perhaps forgetting the expression of the will of the electorate less than two years before.

Arthur Greenwood, the Lord Privy Seal, made a valid point when he said that Churchill's real objective was "...to consolidate the serried ranks of his followers who dash hither and thither....He is trying to rally his supporters, not on constructive proposals, but on their common hatred of the Labour Party."[50] If this was Churchill's purpose he succeeded, because the anti-Government vote on the motion of no-confidence was the largest to that date: 371 to 204, with the Liberals adding their mite to the virtually complete Tory poll. During this period, the public opinion polls showed that the Conservatives had gained adherents. However, they still failed to win by-elections.

In a debate on navy estimates in March, 1948, Mr. Churchill was in rare form discussing one of his favorite subjects. The Leader of the Opposition had been astounded and dismayed by a recent announcment by the Admiralty that the Home Fleet consisted on one cruiser and four "battle" destroyers. Churchill declared himself "...astonished at this

[49] Hansard, 434, col. 1337. [50] Ibid., col. 1354.

new naval term. I have heard of battleships and battle cruisers, but the Minister of Defence must be getting hard up when he has to speak about 'battle' destroyers. The...Gentleman saw a way...by using the word 'battle' so that it gave a more bracing and inspiriting feeling to the uninstructed public...."[51] I once heard someone say that Mr. Churchill's mind plays tricks on him whenever battleships are mentioned. One imagines that he had a deep personal attachment to those great ships with their historic names, some having been built during his tenure as First Lord of the Admiralty. Now they were being scrapped and he did not like it:

> These battleships are symbols of power. Perhaps battleships are only symbols of power now, but they count as invaluable resources, and they are considered in every country....There is an indefinite and unkowable value in old ships....But now the Government have proclaimed a clean cut; they have gloried in stripping themselves to the bone. All that sense of a latent, indefinable strength...is precipately...swept away.[52]

More pertinent, perhaps, was the fact that the nation badly needed scrap metal. Churchill was on sounder ground when he attacked the growing bureaucracy of the Admiralty in a period when the fleet was being reduced in size. According to him, there were 4,950 civilian and naval employees at the Admiralty in 1939 as compared with 12,650 in 1948. He concluded his speech by saying, "...I accuse them of disparaging our naval strength at a time of increasing danger....I censure their misuse--uneconomical and wasteful misuse, lush indulgence in misuse--of the manpower provided.... finally...I censure the lack of policy and comprehension which in this as in other spheres has led our country down to levels of inefficiency which we have never plumbed before."[53]

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[51] Churchill, Europe Unite, p. 265. [52] Ibid., pp. 271-72.

[53] Ibid., pp. 274-75.

He followed up his attack on the management of the navy with one directed at the army. It was a similar stody of too much money expended and too many men tied down for the results which were achieved. "Nothing," he thought, "compares with the mishandling and squandering of our resources of the Defence Services. Should war come...a terrible accountancy will be required from those to whom Parliament has accorded...unparalleled resources and unprecedented power."[54]

The Conservatives were somewhat ambivalent on the subject of nationalization. In the debate on the Address in August, 1945, Mr. Churchill said that the national ownership of the Bank of England raised no issues of principle with him; but he added, "I give my opinion--anybody else may give his own."[55] When the Bill came up in October the Tories decided to oppose it, but during the debates Churchill was conspicuous by his absence. This added to the embarrassment of Sir John Anderson and Oliver Stanley, who had the responsibility for setting forth the Conservative argument against nationalization--the essence of which was that the high standards of probity consistently demonstrated by the Bank made it unnecessary to nationalize it; and that such a step might lead to a loss of confidence abroad. During the period when the Bill was being debated, the Tories showed little vigor, and most of them did not even bother to attend. In the division giving the Bill a second reading, most of the Conservative Front Bench was absent, and Robert Boothby, a prominent backbencher, actually voted with the Government. During the recommital stage on December 17th fewer than 100 Conservatives stayed around to support party sponsored amendments to the first clauses, and

54 Ibid., p. 486. 55 Hoffman, p. 228.

many of the later clauses were allowed to pass unopposed. In the debate on the third reading two days later, Captain Crookshank declared that the Opposition was "completely opposed" to the Bill; but it was singularly unconvincing because only 126 Tories voted to deny the measure a third reading.[56]

The Conservatives were more vigorous in opposing the Coal Industry Nationalization Bill which was introduced early in 1946. In 1943 Churchill had actually accepted the principle of coal nationalization, but he had stated at the time that the scale of compensation would be the crucial problem.[57] In the Election of 1945, however, he had argued that public ownership would not solve the problems of the industry. Churchill did not take any party in the debates on coal nationalization, leaving Eden and Major Lloyd George to carry the main burden for the Opposition. "There is nothing in this Bill," Eden said, "which would lead any impartial critic to believe that the Government's scheme is going to put the coal industry on its feet."[58] Major Lloyd George, the former Tory Minister for Fuel and Power, was the second Opposition speaker on the question. He spoke in the tones of one who had come to the subject with an open mind, anxious to determine what was best for all parties. "I have never believed," he said, "that all nationalisation is bad; I have certainly never believed that all private enterprise is good."[59] In his view, the problems of the coal industry would only be aggravated by the measure proposed by Labour. "I have always felt," he said, "that too much stress is laid on ownership and too little on reorganisation."[60] This was the standard Tory argument against the nationalization proposals.

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56 Hoffman, pp. 228-29. 57 Ibid., p. 232.
58 Hansard, 418, col. 730. 59 Ibid., col. 875. 60 Ibid., col. 878.

There was no great fire in the Conservative speeches opposing the Coal Bill. They were more vehement on the subject of compensation than on the principle of nationalizing the industry. Generally, the Opposition mustered only moderate numbers in the division lobbies. Their maximum strength came on the motion to give the Bill a second reading when the vote was 359 to 182, the Liberals voting with the Government. On the third reading the Tory vote was well down, only 143 to 324 for the Government.[61]

The Conservative opposition to the Transport Bill was more aggressive than anything previously seen from them in the 1945 Parliament. Again, Mr. Churchill was generally absent, taking no part whatever in the debates, nor in most of the voting. Eden was in constant attendance, supported ably by Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, Oliver Stanley, and Brendan Bracken. Eden voted in every single division connected with the Bill.

One of the phenomena of the fight against the nationalization of road transport was the appearance of a number of petitions brought in by Conservative members, requesting the House to defeat the measure. Mr. Max Aitken tabled a petition from the London Metropolitan Area with 145,000signatures attached;[62] Sir Arnold Gridley presented one signed by 17,000 members of twenty-eight Chambers of Commerce;[63] Mr. Sidney Shephard brought one in from the East Midlands Traffic Area with more than 40,000 names;[64] Brigadier Mackeson presented one signed by 55,000 users of road transport;[65] and 27,000 signatures came in from the Eastern Traffic Area.[66]

During the committee stage of the Bill the Conservatives tried so

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61 Hoffman, p. 232. 62 Hansard, 433, cols. 1355-56.
63 Ibid., col. 1356. 64 Hansard, 432, col. 913.
65 Hansard, 436, col. 1921. 66 Hansard, 434, cols. 1461-62.

many devices to delay its progress that the Government invoked the guillotine motion to speed it through.[67] In the debate to recommit the Bill, held April 29-30, 1947, the Tories were in a fighting mood. They forced no fewer than twenty-seven divisions and maintained a good number of M. P.'s throughout.[68] In the division against giving the Bill a second reading they mustered very nearly their maximum strength, plus the Liberals, producing 204 nay votes.[69] On the third reading the vote was 304 to 194.[70]

The Conservatives let the Bill for the nationalization of electricity go through with only a modicum of opposition, but their effort against the Gas Bill was truly spectacular. Churchill's old friend, Mr. Brendan Bracken, led the fight, which, during the committee debates, verged on being a filibuster. Bracken announced that "...we shall oppose this bill in all its stages,"[71] and he meant it. There were 156 divisions in the Gas Bill Committee as compared with only 35 in the Electricity Bill Committee.[72] Hoffman claims that the Conservatives were successful in getting seventy-six amendments accepted by the Government, but he does not, unfortunately, elaborate.[73] As an alternative to public ownership of the gas industry Bracken said, "Let the Government appoint Gas Commissioners, with wider powers....They should be empowered to call upon the industry for plans for integration, to amend them if necessary in the public interest, and also given the power to compel them to be carried out. They should, in fact, be given general powers to supervise the industry."[74] The votes on the second and third readings were, respectively, 354 to 179 and 340 to 190.[75] Neither Churchill nor Butler

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67 Hoffman, p. 237. 68 Hansard, 436, cols. 1736-2126.
69 Hoffman, p. 237. 70 Hansard, 437, cols. 167-72.
71 Hansard, 447, col. 255. 72 Hoffman, p. 246. 73 Ibid., p. 247.
74 Hansard, 447, cols, 245-46. 75 Hansard, 447, cols 485-90 and Hansard, 452, cols 553-58.

voted, though they were, presumably, paired. The Liberals supported the Government.

It was only to be expected that the most determined Tory attack on a nationalization proposal would come on the Iron and Steel Bill, which was introduced rather late in the life of the 1945 Parliament. Mr. Churchill was present for the debates and his speeches were powerful in their onslaught on the proposal. On November 16, 1948, at the very beginning of the consideration of steel nationalization, Mr. Churchill intervened with a speech that contained sense and vituperation in almost equal measures. He began in a most reasonable way:

> In drawing up our line of battle for the grievous and untimely quarrel that is thrust upon us, the Conservative Party in no way abandons the necessary control of the steel industry which has been so long in operation. We certainly consider that the price controls which we ourselves introduced...must be taken as an essential and permanent feature of our policy. Neither do we regard the steel industry in its present state as incapable of further reform....

In his speech Churchill developed the theme that the Steel Bill was being pushed through in order to prove that nationalization could be a success--as it had not been in other industries. Furthermore, he believed that the Socialists were insisting upon it for purely ideological reasons without regard for the true nature of the industry:

> I say this is not a Bill, it is a plot; not a plan to increase production, but rather...an operation in restraint of trade. It is not a plan to help our patient struggling people, but a burglar's jemmy....this is not an economic measure conceived in...the national interest, but a party dodge to hold that gang together where they sit until they have run the full length of their term....The Socialist Ministers must have something new to feed the flame of party strife and to prove that they still hate and are trying to maul the other half of their fellow countrymen. The one thing that fills their minds, the one thing which they fear and shrink from, is the General Election, which is coming upon them and which will end in obloquy and censure on their dismal and evil reign.[76]

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[76] Churchill, Europe Unite, pp. 452-464.

In another debate on the Iron and Steel Bill a year later, Mr. Churchill stated categorically, "Should we be returned to power one of our first steps will be to expunge from the Statute Book this wanton, wasteful, and partisan Measure, in which many of those associated with it do not, in their hearts, believe, and which strikes this country a bitter blow at a bad time."[77]

Churchill got his wish for a new Parliament in which to consider the Bill because the Lords put up a stiff fight against it and delayed its progress. Around the first of November, 1949 Mr. Attlee announced that he intended to end the deadlock between the two houses by delaying the operation of the Iron and Steel Bill until after the next General Election. Churchill commented, "I am glad that the House of Lords should once again have vindicated their wisdom and sagacity....they have prevented an act of folly and voiced the opinion of the vast majority of the nation...they render a service in making sure that the people are effectively consulted on the proposals to nationalize steel....it is not the function of the House of Lords to govern the people but to make sure that the people have the right to govern themselves."[78]

The Labour Government introduced a Parliament Bill to reduce the length of time the Lords could delay legislation from two years to one. When it was first being considered, in November of 1947, Mr. Churchill intervened with a sensible and good natured speech. He defended the two-year rule as a reflection of an historic British devotion to the restraint and division of power. Speaking of Mr. Attlee he said, "The right hon. Gentleman has an obvious, unconcealable, well-known relish

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[77] Hansard, 469, col. 2045. [78] Randolph Churchill (ed.), In The Balance, Speeches 1949 and 1950 by Winston S. Churchill (Boston, 1952), p. 136.

for petty dictatorship....No Government in time of peace has ever had such arbitrary power over the lives and actions of the British people, and no Government has ever failed more completely to meet their daily practical needs. Yet the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues are avid for more power. No Government has ever combined so passionate a lust for power with such incurable impotence in its exercise."[79] He compared the House of Lords to a brake: "There ought to be a brake. A brake, in its essence, is one-sided; it prevents an accident...."[80] Another side to his argument was, "No free country of which I have heard...which is enjoying democratic institutions has adopted a single-Chamber Government."[81] He returned at the end to his main theme, "As a free-born Englishman, what I hate is the sense of being at anybody's mercy or in anybody's power, be he Hitler or Attlee. We are approaching very near to dictatorship in this country...I will be quite candid with the House--without either its criminality or its efficiency."[82] The Parliament Bill was finally passed in 1949. The Tories had put up a good fight, but without the Liberals. The votes on the second and third readings were 333 to 196 and 340 to 187.[83]

When the Minister of Supply announced the membership of the Iron and Steel Corporation on September 14, 1950, Mr. Churchill used this occasion as a last chance to defeat the Government on the question of steel nationalization. Mr. Churchill spoke of the follies of "...a fanatical intelligentsia obsessed by economic fallacies."[84] The Tories mounted a powerful attack but the vote was 306 to 300 against them, the Liberals voting against the Government.[85] This was seven under the combined, maximum Liberal and Conservative strength in the Parliament of 1950.

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[79] Churchill, Europe Unite, p. 199. [80] Ibid., p. 201. [81] Ibid., p. 203.
[82] Ibid., p. 206. [83] Hansard, 469. [84] Churchill, In The Balance, p. 381.
[85] Hoffman, p. 255.

In a little over a year the Conservatives were in a position to reverse steel nationalization and did so.

In September, 1949 there was a three days debate on the devaluation of the pound from $4.03 to $2.83 in terms of dollars. Oliver Stanley led off for the Tories the first day against the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, but on the second day Mr. Churchill delivered one of his longest speeches of the period. His speech was really quite mild, almost sympathethic. He clearly regretted that devaluation had finally arrived and he delved deeply into the hardships which it would bring to a great trading nation, but he did not seem to have any alternative in mind, except that a non-Socialist government in the first place would have made it unnecessary. He was charitable enough to say that "No one must underrate the task which feel upon these Labour Ministers as the consequence of the Election of 1945." He even thought that Sir Stafford was "...right to go the whole hog; and that it was better to cut down the rate of exchange to this level in the hopes of a later revival than to take half measures which would soon have been overtaken and overwhelmed by the true and real forces which are relentlessly at work." He detailed the enormous sums which had been given or loaned to Britain from abroad: £1,750,000,000 from the United States, £300,000,000 by Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. In addition there had been the £110,000,000 for the Argentine railways and the fact that at the end of the war Australia had owed the United Kingdom £220,000,000 which was now a deficit of £10,000,000. "In all history," he said, "no community has ever been helped and kept by gratuitous overseas aid....And where are we at the end of it all? That is the emergency which we have been called together to face." What was needed, he thought, was a General Election

very soon, as "...all our difficulties will have a better chance of being solved in a new House of Commons....I thank God that in my old age I preserve an invincible faith that we shall overcome them."[86] In their motion of no confidence the Opposition mustered one of their best votes in the 1945 Parliament. Virtually every Tory M. P. was present in the division plus the Liberals and most independents; but Labour was sustained by 350 votes to 212.[87]

Mr. Attlee, in the closing speech of the devaluation debate, complained that the Tories, by their constant harping on the economic condition of the country, were undermining confidence in the Government at home and abroad. He struck Mr. Churchill and his party where they were most vulnerable, the fact that they had not been able to capture any seats from Labour in by-elections. Attlee said, "...the right hon. Gentleman has found on 32 occaions that there is no confidence in him."[88]

On October 26-27, 1949 there was a general debate on the economic health of the country. Eden led off for the Opposition and called for reduced Government spending and lower taxation: "...they are the only way of getting out of this calamitous,vicious circle of taxation, inflation, more taxation, and more inflation."[89] Churchill delivered an address which was more typical that his speech on devaluation--that is, full of strong words and baleful predictions. He ended by saying, "The Government have devalued the pound and devalued the British nation, but most of all they have devalued themselves and brought us to bankruptcy, and the sooner they appeal to their fellow countrymen the better it will be for all who wish to see this country rise again...."[90] He hit home

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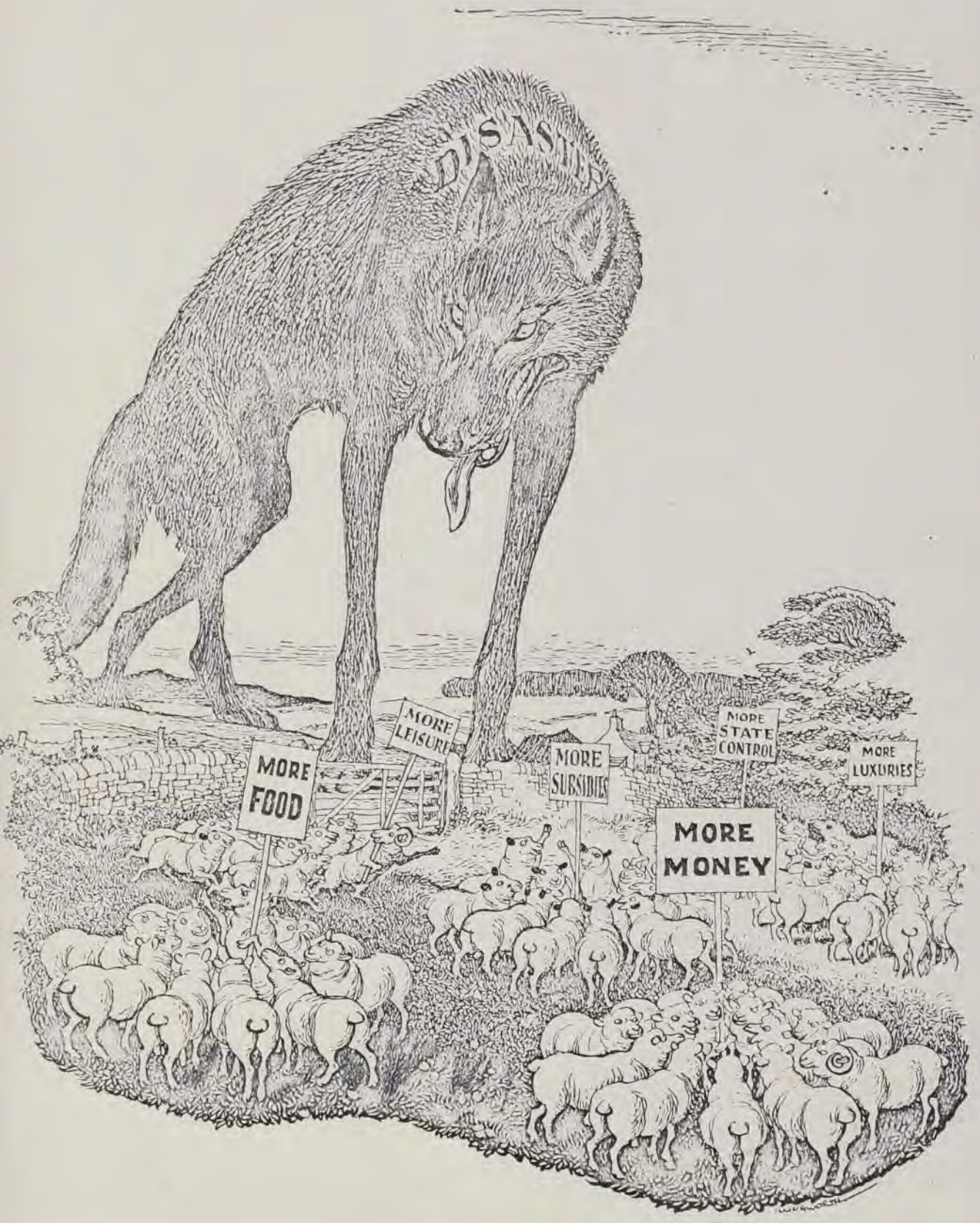
86 Churchill, In The Balance, pp. 85-100.

87 Hansard, 468, cols. 439-44. 88 Ibid., cols. 439-440.

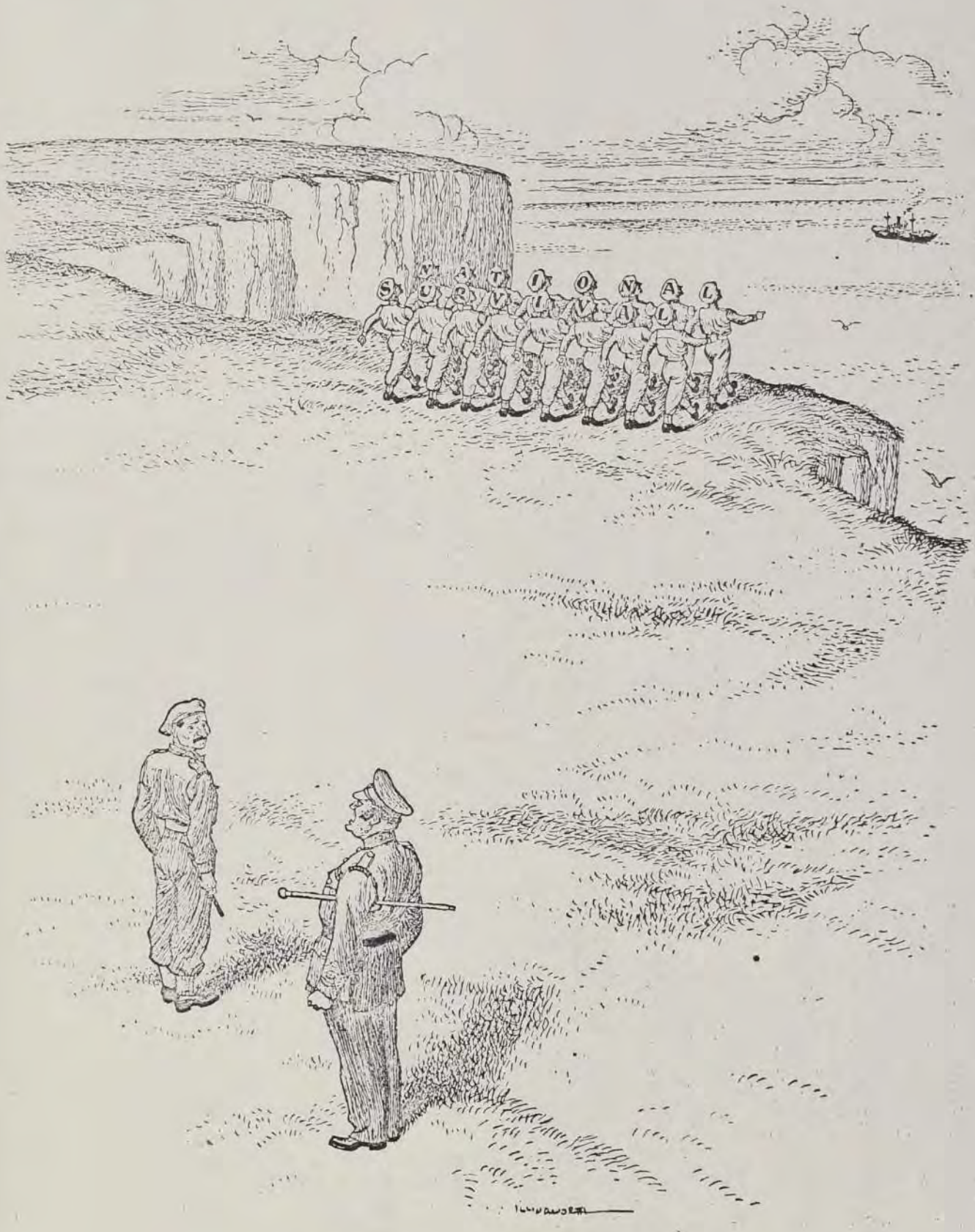
89 Ibid., col. 1371. 90 Churchill, In The Balance, p. 131.


## WHAT GOES NEXT?

The men represented are Mr. Attlee and Sir Stafford Cripps.




SHEEP'S PARADISE




"SAY SOMETHING——IF IT'S ONLY 'GOOD-BYE'"

This appeared in Punch after the debate on the economic health of the nation when the Opposition mustered its largest vote in the Parliament of 1945.

when he reminded his audience that consols issued three years before at £100 were then only realizing £66, and that the National Insurance Reserve Fund held £201,000,000 worth of these securities. This meant that they had an actual value of only £133,000,000. "All this," he remarked, "is taken out of the subscriptions of the wage-earning population of this country."[91] In opposing the Government's call for approval of its economic policies, the Tories and their allies showed their greatest voting strength in the 1945 Parliament. The vote was 353 to 222.[92] This was, however, ten under the total non-Labour affiliated strength in the Commons.

Labour's slim majority, its internal divisions, and the Korean War helped to make the Parliament of 1950 quite a different affair than its predecessor. After the outbreak of war in the Far East and the multiplication of British problems in the Middle East, foreign policy and re-armament commanded the major attention of the House. With the exception of the completion of steel nationalization, the Socialists dropped their natural program of state ownership. This will be better shown in Chapters V and VI.

The Tory opposition in the House of Lords is not a subject which can be probed in any depth or detail. In Lord Salisbury the Conservatives had a wise and constructive Leader who was often quite effective in securing concessions from the Government. Attlee made the same observation in his memoir.[93] The Lords became most controversial when they delayed the operation of the Iron and Steel Bill and when they refused to accept the abolition of capital punishment.

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91 Churchill, In The Balance, p. 130. 92 Hansard, 468, cols. 1635-1640.
93 Hoffman, pp. 239-40.

At the beginning of 1951 the Conservatives began to try to make things very difficult for the Government. They assailed them on every occasion. (In fact, Labour was defeated seven times during the course of the Parliament of 1950, but never on a major question.) On March 7, 1951, the Tories adopted a new tactic which was hailed as the beginning of a still fiercer campaign to bring pressure on the Government, already weakened by sickness and resignation. It was not improbable that the Government might be prompted to seek a new election as a way out of their manifold difficulties. Hoffman suggests that this use of the nullifying prayer grew spontaneously among Tory backbenchers, but this seems questionable.[94] The nullifying prayers were designed to keep the House sitting late over essentially trivial things. The Government would be forced to maintain a sizeable number of members present in order to avoid embarrassing defeats. Thus, with their small majority, they would be progressively worn down. Here is one example out of the many prayers:

> 4:36 a.m., 8 March 1951
>
> Squadron Leader Burden (Gillingham):
> I beg to move,
>
> That an humble Address be presented to His Majesty, praying that the Order, dated 8 February, 1951, entitled the Utility Apparel (Women's Domestic Overalls and Aprons)...be annulled.[95]

When the Question was put the House divided ayes 0, noes 182. The Tory speakers would put down these prayers but would not bother to vote for them. The session of March 8th did not end until 6:10 a.m.

A number of exaggerations have grown up around the use of this tactic. In fact, it was only employed four sitting days, not in succession. Robert Boothby's statement at the beginning of the maneuver, which is often quoted,

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[94] Hoffman, p. 261. [95] Hansard, 485, col. 901. A Labour M. P. interjected at this point: "The prayers of the wicked will be as nothing." (Ibid.)

contained only a bare modicum of truth. Boothby himself took no active role in the use of the nullifying prayer. He told the press,

> We shall harry the life out of them. We shall keep them up night and day. The only way to get rid of them...is to wear them out....until they get absolutely hysterical and say 'We can't stand it any more,' and this is what we are going to do for the next two or three months.[96]

Only on the night of March 8th did the prayer device get out of hand. The Speaker was definitely watching the movement carefully to determine if he would have to take a strong action to prevent it from becoming a feature of parliamentary life. On March 15th he said, "I am quite prepared to give all these Prayers a fair run, but not more."[97]

The Economist called on the Tories to stop harrying the Government as this only tended to weaken the prestige of the nation in critical talks abroad. When the Opposition secured a majority in an adjournment debate, The Economist condemned it as "...the result of instinctive belligerency rather than of any deliberate plan." The journal went on to give the Tories advice out of the mouth of Disraeli: "For an opposition to use its strength for the express purpose of throwing out a government, which it is at the same time aware that it cannot replace...would be an act of recklessness and faction which could not be too strongly condemned."[98]

Some have thought that the Conservative Opposition and Mr. Churchill's leadership of it often lacked distinction in the period 1945-51. There were periodic mutterings in the press and among Tory backbenchers to this effect, but when haven't these sources found something to mutter over? There is great difficulty in assessing the effectiveness of an

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[96] D. E. Butler (ed.), The British General Election of 1951 (London, 1952), pp. 13-14.

[97] Hansard, 485, col. 1931. [98] The Economist, April 1, 1951, p. 697.

opposition because no one has ever properly defined the problem. When the difference between the parties is slight, as in the Parliament of 1950, then the Opposition may actually try to defeat the Government, as the Tories did. It was pointed out, however, that The Economist disapproved of that as essentially frivolous and irresponsible. Presumably, had the Conservatives been able to defeat the Government on a major question it would have been judged good parliamentary practice. Opposition for its own sake is, apparently, not always admired by the responsible press. There are many questions which need to be resolved. Should an opposition party oppose only when it can present a viable alternative policy? Should it, in a time of national trial, try to co-operate with the Government and present a common front to the nation and the world? Or, should it oppose at every opportunity, even risking a charge of irresponsibility? In 1947 Mr. Attlee said in the House, "...I have never known a party leader who more consistently followed the good old maxim that it is the duty of the Opposition to oppose. During the last few years he has seized every opportunity to attack the Government...."[99] It is impossible to know whether Attlee meant this remark to be complimentary or derogatory. It must be noted, of course, that persistent and all-out attack is not always the most effective opposition. A policy of calmness, construction, and conciliation is more likely to gain subtle concessions from the party in power. There is good reason to believe that such a policy would not have been amiss in many periods of the 1945 Parliament. Lord Salisbury apparently practiced it in the House of Lords with some effect. Such a policy will not, however, win headlines or tickle the fancy of die-hards within the party. It may even lead to acute

[99] Hoffman, p. 243.

restlessness within the opposition party and charges of impotence from the faithful. Such a policy might also lessen the party's election prospects. There were numerous instances where the Conservatives did not oppose measures of the Labour Government. In 1946, for example, the Tories supported the Government against amendments from its own backbenchers calling for a socialist alternative in foreign policy and the elimination of conscription.[100] Churchill often claimed that "...we have given the Government steady support, not only in foreign affairs, but in questions of Defence."[101] There was a good deal of bi-partisanship in these matters, but Mr. Churchill was far from accurate in regard to his personal claims to have given "steady support." Messrs. Eden and Butler normally adopted a more moderate attitude in these spheres. In May, 1948, Butler said that the Opposition regarded it as their duty "...to see that the self-reliance of the Rt. Hon. Gentleman [Bevin] did not degenerate into self-satisfaction and his imperturbability into a majestic calm."[102]

In conclusion it may be said that the Conservative Party in Opposition did not adhere to either extreme theory of opposition. It did not oppose the Government on every issue--forcing divisions at every opportunity--nor was it always responsible. Judged by critical standards, the Tories, and Mr. Churchill in particular, were wildly irresponsible in some of their attacks; but these perorations were addressed only incidentally to the members present in the House. Their real aim was to convince the electorate that the Socialists had brought the nation to a sorry state and that they should be called in at the earliest opportunity to reverse the tide of events. Certainly, the Labour record was not so glittering as to be immune from attacks by reasonable men.

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100 Hoffman, pp. 236-37. 101 Churchill, Europe Unite, p. 491.
102 Hoffman, p. 244.

Lord Moran has recently written that "The dust of the election had scarcely settled when whispers were heard in the inner circle of the Tory hierarchy that Winston needed a long rest."[103] Many have felt that his conduct of the Opposition was uninspired and unsuccessful, but I cannot agree. It is true that he was often absent from the House. There were numerous illnesses, vacations, speaking engagements abroad, and books completed; but what could he have accomplished by ritualistic attendance in the Commons against the mighty Labour majority? Was he not a more splendid asset to the party in his role as high constable to the West and godfather to the European Union? Did not the publication of his memoirs, with their revival of the glories of his war service, attract more attention than he could have gained by sitting day-by-day listening to the outpourings of backbenchers? He was always available for the great parliamentary set pieces and for the party meetings. These were the occasions that commanded newspaper space. He often indulged in extravagant statements of abuse against the Government, but cannot this be explained by the burning frustrations which he must have felt? Life in Britain and her position in the world had fallen below the levels of the past; communism had advanced to the center of Europe; Indian, Burma, and Ceylong were gone; the Canal was in jeopardy; and former client states twisted the lion's tail with impunity. Mr. Churchill had many reasons for frustration and anger.

Throughout his career, and particularly in this period, Churchill dealt in large statements, the rhetorical effect of which was won at the cost of historical and sociological precision. In spite of his great imagination, many of his speeches in these years were repetitive and filled with well-worn themes, but even in the greatest of politicians

[103] Lord Moran, p. 110.

some of this is inevitable and even desirable. He remained, and apparently without ghost writers, the most original political speaker of the time. How could "the greatest living Englishman" have been replaced with any profit to the Tory Party.

Hoffman was at pains to point out the negative aspects of the Conservative Opposition. At the end of his book he states that he might have been guilty of presenting too critical a view; but, he said, "...it is a useful antidote to the view (influenced largely by what has been considered the poor record of the Labour opposition since 1951) that Conservative opposition...was some classic illustration of the fine art."[104] An article by Bernard Crick, a leading Labour intellectual, supports Hoffman on his latter point. Crick thought highly of the way the Tories conducted their opposition:

> They did not cut themselves to bits by trying to muzzle their saints and sinners; rather they turned them loose on the government....Their leaders built up a 'new image' of an official Conservatism while all the time reaping the benefits of the slow discrediting of the government which arose, in part, at least, from the 'irresponsible' opposition of their own trouble makers and untouchables. The right wing did the dirty work and the centre reaped the respectable benefits.[105] (my italics)

According to Crick, "Opposition is an orchestration of all discontents; the leader must harmonise and conduct it, but it cannot be reduced to a single theme. A leader of an Opposition should be able to capitalise on diversity, not destroy it."[106] Whether he had Churchill in mind or not I do not know, but it seems to me that his conduct of the Opposition conforms to what Crick wrote, and his definition of the needs of that exacting job seems good to me. The parliamentary opposition of the Conservative Party did not clearly reflect the "New Conservatism," but

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104 Hoffman, p. 269.

105 Bernard Crick, "Two Theories of Opposition," The New Statesman, June 18, 1960, pp. 882-83.

106 Ibid., p. 883. (my italics)

Churchill was wise enough to permit the re-orientation of the image and policy of the Conservative Party under the direction of Woolton and Butler, and to give occasional public support to this work. At the same time he articulated his "...splendidly anachronistic High Toryism,"[107] which would keep the bulk of the rank-and-file happy. In this way the Conservative Party looked backward and forward at the same time. He was astute enough to prevent his party from becoming too progressive or too reactionary. In this way the Tories were able to gain back many who had voted for Labour in 1945 and to retain the loyalty of that hard core of party workers and contributors. A man of less sense might have retarded the necessary work of the progressives or alienated the old guard. Churchill struck a good balance for a party striving to reconstruct itself after the defeat and humiliation of 1945.

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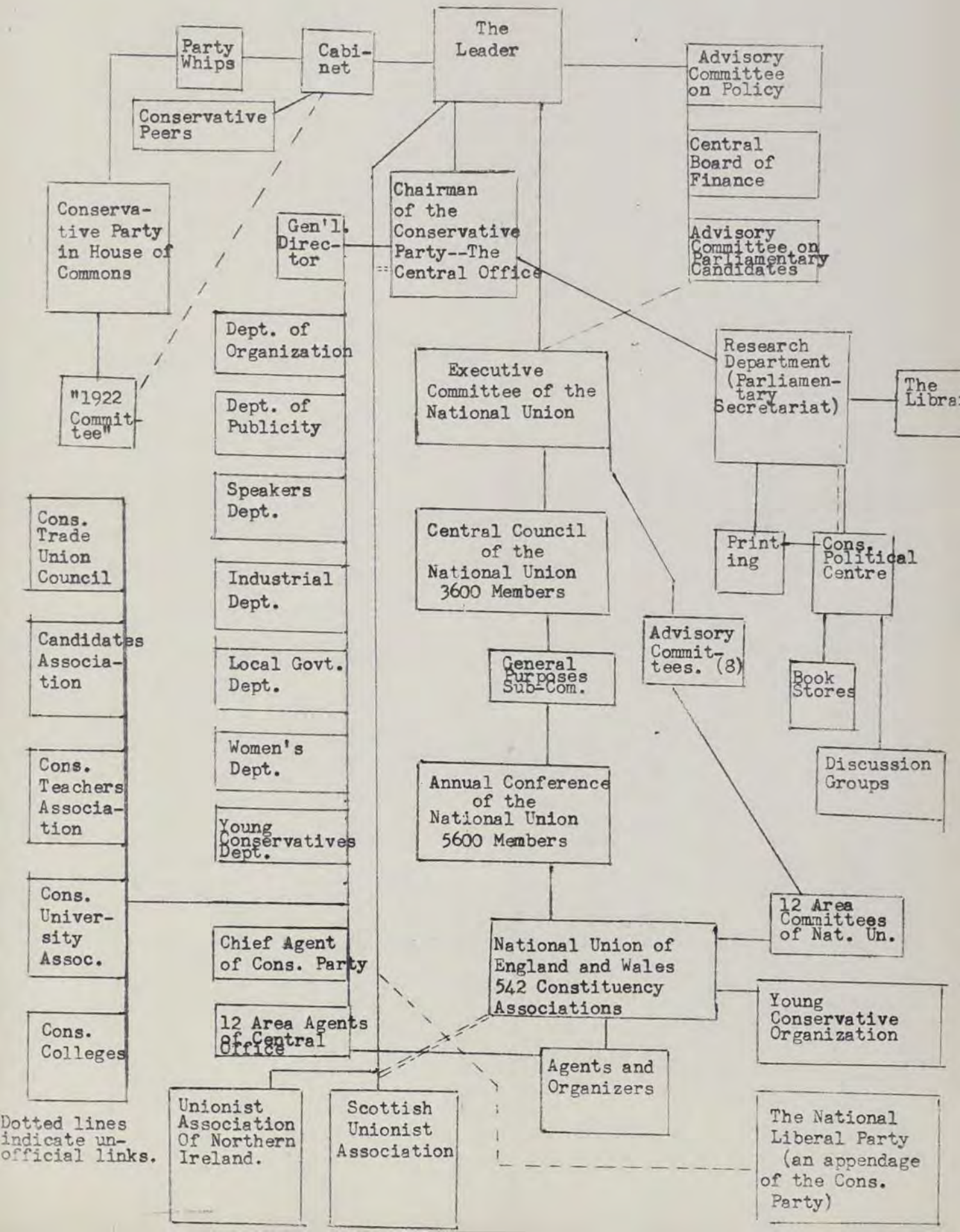
107 Sir John Anderson quoted in John-Wheeler Bennett, John Anderson, Viscount Waverley (New York, 1962), pp. 340-41.

CHART SHOWING THE STRUCTURE OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN



# CHAPTER III

# LORD WOOLTON AND THE VIEW FROM THE CENTRAL OFFICE

In the previous chapter it was pointed out that there was some unhappiness expressed in the Conservative Party with the leadership of the Parliamentary Opposition. This discontent extended itself to cover the condition of the Central Office and the party machinery generally. It was to remedy these deficiencies that Sir Frederick Marquis, the Earl of Woolton, was named Chairman of the Conservative Party on July 1, 1946. He was a man of enormous charm and self-confidence, with a reputation for getting things done gained in a distinguished career in commerce and government. The choice of Lord Woolton ultimately proved a most happy one, for as The Times said on February 14, 1950:

> In sharp contrast to 1945 the Conservative Party entered this year's campaign with a party machine markedly superior in many respects to that of their opponents; and the man who made the machine, and found both the financial motive power for it and the voluntary workers to follow in its wake, was Lord Woolton. In one respect, too, his achievement is unique.... He is not merely the maker of the machine: He has also exercised an influence greater than any of his predecessors among the Party's organizers on the making of policy.[1]

This was, in essence, the contribution of Lord Woolton to the reconstruction of the Conservative Party. Because of the great energy and imagination which he brought to the job of party chairman, he succeeded in thus impressing his contemporaries and in leaving a distinctive mark on the practice of politics in his time.

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[1] The Times, February 14, 1950, p. 4.

On the day when the results of the 1945 Election became known, Lord Woolton wrote to Winston Churchill making formal application, for the first time, to join the Conservative Party. The defeated Prime Minister commented that though many had joined him in success, this was the first time he could recall anyone asking to join him in defeat.[2] A year later Churchill sent for his old colleague in the Coalition and offered him the party chairmanship:

> Mr. Churchill told me of his concern about the state of the Conservative Party organization. I knew that...he had never given much support to the...Central Office, and he unhesitatingly told me so. He said he believed that no one else could reorganise the...Party and bring it to the proper state of efficiency and that the view was shared by my friends in the...Shadown Cabinet.[3]

Woolton says that he asked to be excused from the task, but after a month's deliberation he accepted Churchill's offer. He gave his services without recompense, but he asked for and received carte blanche in the domain of party housekeeping.[4]

Lord Woolton was a central figure in the Tory revival, and in many ways personally symbolic of its background, aims, and success. He was an essentially old-fashioned, even quaint figure, but there was nothing of the reactionary about the man--his ideas on political, social, and economic questions were moderate, enlightened, and kindly. He was a man of good instincts and good intentions. He had learned of the existence of the "two nations" at first hand while living (1908) as a student of sociology in a Liverpool slum. An old woman actually died of starvation next door to where he was staying. It was in these circumstances that he joined the Fabian Society, the influence of which was

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[2] Woolton, F. J. Marquis, 1st Earl of, The Memoirs of the Right Honorable The Earl of Woolton (London, 1959), p. 327.

[3] Ibid., p. 328. [4] Ibid., p. 329.

to remain with him throughout his career. He described the condition of the unfortunates of society in the days of his youth in the following terms:

> ...poverty was almost as widespread as prosperity. A large section of the less skilled people in Britain were badly housed and badly fed, and an alarming percentage, upwards of a third, of the children were under-nourished. People whose living depended upon muscular power rather than technical skill were constantly short of the basic necessities of life; and the prevalence of rickets among children and anaemia among women were signs of this....For the vast majority of the working population the coming of old age was a terrifying prospect.[5]

Such a thorough condemnation of conditions before World War I could be expected from a socialist propagandist, but it makes rather remarkable reading coming from the pen of a recently retired Chairman of the Conservative Party.

After World War I Lord Woolton rose rapidly with a department store chain, ultimately reaching the presidency of the firm. His business career did not preclude the continuation of his social concern. His work to combat slum conditions in Liverpool earned him a knighthood on the recommendation of Ramsay MacDonald. He gained a popular reputation as an exponent of enlightened employee-employer relations. Lord Woolton was an advocate of self-regulation coupled with an attitude of social responsibility within business. He did not believe in government direction of commerce and industy. His experience as Controller of Boots during World War I had convinced him that such direction was restrictive, wasteful, and unproductive. In 1917 he resigned from the Fabian Society because of his repugnance to State management and control. "I was suspicious," he wrote, "of the regulation of industry by people

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[5] Woolton, pp. 4-5.

without practical experience of it."[6] With this background Lord Woolton was undoubtedly an excellent choice for the Chairmanship of the Conservative Party in a period during which it was trying to present itself as the champion of bridled free enterprise and unbridled social security. He was an ideal symbol of the union of responsible business principles and mild socialism which was, essentially, the Tory motif in the period 1945-51.

Furthermore, he had proved himself a good administrator in two important Government departments, the Ministries of Food and Reconstruction. The public-at-large identified him as the genial man who got the food through during the war years. Moreover, he was not a mere party hack, nor a member of the Tory "Old Guard" as many previous chairmen had been. He could be presented as one who had stood aloof from party politics while rendering great services to the nation, but who had, when he saw the dangers raised by a Socialist Government, entered the fray in order to prevent as much damage as he could.

The reconstruction of the Conservative Party was begun even before Lord Woolton took command. The period between the election defeat and September, 1946, when Woolton actually assumed his office, was well spent, not only in the realm of ideological rearmament, as will be shown in the next chapter, but also at the Central Office. Ralph Assheton, Woolton's predecessor, was an effective Chairman, but "...it was his fate to have to stand at the sidelines and watch the Conservative organization grow to full power under his successor...."[7]

Lord Woolton has expressed his shock at the condition of the party when he came to the Central Office. It was, he wrote, "...the most

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[6] Woolton, p. 49. [7] Hoffman, p. 78.

topsy-like arrangement that I had ever come across....there was the strongest possible temptation to come to a sound business conclusion and tell the party that the best thing to do with machinery of this nature was to scrap it and start again."[8] Political managers must, however, always keep in mind the fact that their organizations are largely made up of volunteer workers, and that these people cannot be rudely commanded and shaken but must be brought along by persuasion and inspiration. Lord Woolton possessed wisdom accumulated in a lifetime of dealing successfully with people and he understood the need for tact and restraint in approaching the problems of the Conservative Party. Woolton made many changes but he made them gradually, and only after consolidating his position in the party through major successes. As it was impossible for the Chairman to order the co-operation and direct the activity of the associations, he determined to create "...a headquarters staff that would be so efficient in performance and so approachable in manner, that its influence would overcome its lack of authority." "...if we could do that," he said, "I knew that we should, in the end, find them coming of their own free will into one common organization."[9] Moreover, his central position in the party structure gave him sufficient control over the informal agencies of effective decision-making. He could, therefore, achieve the results he desired without disrupting the relatively unimportant formal organization of the party. He would not risk antagonizing the party's traditional adherents.[10] Large sums of money, hundreds of thousands of new members, and restored confidence were the chief needs of the party, and these were the problems which Lord Woolton first attacked.

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[8] Woolton, p. 332. [9] Ibid., p. 333. [10] Hoffman, p. 82.

One of Lord Woolton's major contributions to his party was to encourage it to spend large sums of money. He introduced scales of spending which were without precedent in the Tory Party. With the assurance of a business executive experienced in handling giant sales promotions, he set about to raise the money which would be required to give the party a wide edge in this vital sphere. His bravado in setting the amount to be collected was breath-taking:

> I decided to make a national appeal for money. I was strongly advised that any such appeal must be a success, that another failure for a defeated party would be well-nigh fatal. Therefore, I was advised to put my sights low in order to secure the certainty of success. A figure of a quarter million pounds was suggested to me....I rejected caution and decided to ask for a fund of one million pounds, thereby demonstrating my faith in the willingness of the party to make sacrifices....the demand for a million gave the party the thrill of high endeavour.[11]

This campaign was begun at the party's annual conference, held at Brighton in October, 1947. It was the largest, and perhaps, the most enthusiastic meeting in the eighty year history of the National Union. "How much is it worth to you," Lord Woolton asked amid great cheering, "to get rid of this Government that is muddling our affairs, running us into national bankruptcy, and bringing our industrial life to a standstill. Isn't it worth paying to get rid of the most incompetent Government in our history."[12] He told them what he wanted:

> I want £1,000,000 for the party funds. I believe that the result of the next general election depends on my getting it... without money no political machine can win elections....It is a new thing for the Conservative Party to make a public appeal for money....In the past the Party has been shy of asking for money, and it has collected for its Central Fund from a few hundred people. We are not a class party. I want the support of every section of society, a broad democratic response from people who are prepared...to pay for their political beliefs....We are overspending ourselves five times, and that cannot go on.[13]

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[11] Woolton, p. 336. [12] The Times, October 4, 1947, p. 4. [13] Ibid. (my italics)

In contrast, Stanley Baldwin had said in 1926, "We need funds and I look to the City of London to give a lead in providing that support which as business men they should be prepared to give, in view of our efforts to make their business safe."[14] The Tories, in appealling to the mass of their followers for funds, were practicing the same democratic spirit which they were pushing in their official propaganda.

These were pre-devaluation pounds sterling, so Lord Woolton was asking the party to raise over four million dollars. This represented a stupendous sum in austerity plagued, high-tax Britain. This money was, as pointed out, for the Central Office only--the associations still had to raise their own funds. Lord Woolton had earlier asked them to aim at an annual fund-raising goal of £2,000 to £3,00 a year. "...only a handful of the associations," he said, "were at any time achieveing this target."[15] This demand was, of course, only an exhortation. However, the 1947 Annual Conference had passed a resolution "suggesting" that the constituency associations should be asked to accept some responsibility for contributing to central funds.[16]

Viewed in this context, Lord Woolton's plan to raise £1,000,000 from October, 1947 to February 29, 1948, for the use of the Central Office alone, was astonishing. Woolton called it "shock tactics." They say that the sum was actually over-subscribed. The italicized words are there deliberately. It is not possible for me to say categorically that all the money was actually raised. Vicker, who was wrong on so many things, says it was, or at least, he goes on the assumption that it was and does not question this. The same is true for Hoffman. Lord Woolton is very vague on the subject in his memoir. He says almost

[14] McKenzie, p. 594. [15] Woolton, p. 336. [16] The Times, October 4, 1947, p. 4.

nothing about how the money was raised, or from where it came, except that "...the majority of the subscriptions were in comparatively small amounts and were personal gifts from people who believed in our...aspirations and in our competence to govern the country."[17] In the same context he wrote, "I have never worked out the average size of the contributions to this fund."[18] This is a strange admission indeed. Looking through The Times from October, 1947 to the end of February, 1948, I found only a few references to the fund, and these were small items revealing in a few lines some large contribution. For example, on December 4, 1947 it was announced that the Primrose League had voted £500 to "Lord Woolton's Fighting Fund."[19] There was no splash at the beginning of March about the success of the drive. On March 4th The Times carried a small item saying that it was thought that the fund was over-subscribed.[20] On March 17th Lord Woolton announced to the Central Council of the National Union that the one million pounds had been raised; but he did not, judging from the article in The Times, give any specifics.[21]

I have read carefully the collected speeches of Winston Churchill for this period and he never mentioned the "Fighting Fund." He made only two party speeches during the time of the drive, at the North-Western Area Meeting in Manchester on December 6, 1947, and a party political broadcast on February 14, 1948, but he did not say anything about the Fund.[22] Moreover, I have never come across any mention of an official party report on the success of the drive, though one might have been issued. I cannot say conclusively, therefore, that the whole amount was raised; but even if only the major part was collected, it was

[17] Woolton, p. 337. [18] Ibid. [19] The Times, December 5, 1947, p. 2.
[20] The Times, March 4, 1948, p. 2. [21] The Times, March 18, 1948, p. 2.
[22] Churchill, Europe Unite, pp. 211-221 and pp. 239-244.

still a major achievement for the period. It is a pity, however, that we do not know the details of the fund, nor the degree of its success. Hoffman says that during the course of the drive, bulletins were issued to the constituencies and their workers containing exhortations, examples of successful projects, and progress reports.[23] He does not, unfortunately, provide any elaboration on this point.

There were many diverse and interesting ways in the which the million was raised, but the bulk of the money was collected by the old-fashioned method of door-to-door canvassing. Apparently, methods and degrees of campaigning zeal varied widely from one association to another. Hoffman says that "Fighting Fund" Committees were organized in "most" constituencies. I could not discover the number which did not have such a committee, but it could have been a significant one, as it certainly was in the case of the membership drive which followed. Weak or lazy associations could only be asked to join in. There was no way to discipline such organizations.

There was, ideally, one canvasser for ever fifty homes, or about 400 for the average urban constituency. One imagines that most of the money collected on the doorstep came in the form of lump sum donations; but there were attempts made to get people to pledge amounts which would be collected on a weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly basis. A box of envelopes was in some instances left with the householder who was willing to make a regular contribution. The canvasser would then come by at agreed upon intervals and pick up the envelopes with the money inside. This had the advantage of saving ~~money~~ time for the donor and collector. Those who could be persuaded to pledge larger sums were asked to sign a banker's order form. In the past, many supporters of the Conservative

23 Hoffman, pp. 87-8.

Party had contributed little or nothing ; but by making the methods of the "Fighting Fund" a regular part of constituency procedure, it was possible to get many people to contribute sums in the range of two shillings a month collected according to a schedule.

Conservative Party collection boxes appeared in pubs and small shops all over the country--the publican and shop keeper being generally the staunchest of Tories. At Garland's Club in Knightsbridge a new drinking custom developed. Whenever a member ordered a round of drinks he would add, "And one for Lord Woolton." The bartender would drop the cost of the undrunk drink into a box on the bar, adding the cost to the Tory customer's bill. In North Norfolk, Young Conservatives did babysitting for the "Fighting Fund." One anonymous donor in London contributed fourteen hogsheads of cognac to the drive and this was auctioned off. The Gower Division in Wales, an area so dominated by Labour that the Tories did not put up a candidate in 1945, raised £150 in a lottery and £200 on a rummage sale. One of the champion fund-raisers was a retired army officer, who collected £1200 from approximately 2500 contributors in four constituencies held by Labour. The Rugby Division of Warwickshire provided an example of what could be done in an area of strong Tory sympathies. There the canvassers collected almost £5,000 by contacting virtually every home in the district in an effort which was sustained powerfully throughout the whole period of the drive. Many ideas were taken from the traditional fund-raising devices of the Anglican Church. Garden parties, whist drives, bazaars, and rummage sales were popular methods of getting money into the fund beyond that raised from large contributors or in door-to-door canvassing. Whenever there was a party meeting a special collection was taken up for the "Fighting Fund." When Anthony Eden

spoke at Westminster Central Hall in London the collection totalled £119. Anthony Nutting, the articulate leader of the Young Conservatives did better at another London affair, with a collection amounting to £150.[24] I have no information, unfortunately, on the large personal contributions made to the fund.

Not only did the success of the "Fighting Fund secure the position of Lord Woolton in the inner circle of the party, and thereby prepare the way for acceptance of his innovations, but it gave a dispirited organization a profound sense of accomplishment. Perhaps more important was the fact that it gave the party a true insight into the way elections could be won in the future.[25] The doorstep approach was a fundamental part of the Woolton revolution. In the campaign to fill the party's war chest it had been demonstrated that it was possible to go to the party's latent strength in the millions, appeal to their sense of loyalty to the party in their living rooms, and collect over a million pounds in less than five months. Much information had been gained on the location and character of this latent strength, and this was put to use in the membership drive and in absolutely perfecting the Marked Register. Lord Woolton summarized the chief lesson of the drive to fill the "Fighting Fund"

> It...was the beginning of a long trail of hard...work done by the rank and file of the party, who not only gave their time to go canvassing, but trained themselves to do it well. The party members throughout the country began to realize that it was not the large public meetings addressed by important people that would be the predominant factor in winning the next election, but the advocacy of people who, combining personal friendliness...with a sense of high national purpose... took these things to the houses of the voters.[26]

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[24] Ray Vicker, How An Election Was Won (Chicago, 1962), pp. 30-41.

[25] Hoffman, pp. 89-90. [26] Woolton, p. 337.

At a party rally in Sheffield on April 19, 1948, addressed by Anthony Eden and Lord Woolton, the drive to enlist a million new members by June 30th was launched. A million pounds in five months, and a million new members in six weeks--such was the ambition of Lord Woolton. The national recruiting campaign conducted by Ralph Assheton in1946 had added only 226,000 new members. By the end of 1947 the total membership of the party was 1,200,000. It could not be established whether all of these people were dues paying.

A committee under the chairmanship of Mr. G. Spencer Summers, prospective Conservative candidate for Aylesbury, was established to plan and direct the campaign. It was announced at the time that drives would be conducted in 428 of the 542 English and Welsh constituencies.[27] I cannot understand why 114 parliamentary districts were to be without a formal membership drive. The absence of an active or effective association in a few totally helpless seats would explain only a small part of the deficiency. It is possible that some of the constituency organizations refused to conduct a membership drive, or thought it was unnecessary. Nothing was said in The Times, or in the books by Vicker and Hoffman.to explain. The question of membership drives in Scotland and Northern Ireland is likewise untreated. One is staggered to find that Lord Woolton did not mention the drive for a million new members in his memoir. Mr. Churchill, in a major speech delivered to the Scottish Unionist meeting at Perth on May 28, 1948, made no mention of the drive.[28] He made only passing references to it in his speeches before the Central Council of the Women's Advisory Committee on April 21, 1948, and the Grand Habitation of the Primrose League at the Albert Hall on April 30th.[29] During the period

[27] The Times, April 21, 1948, p. 2. [28] Churchill, Europe Unite, pp. 339-351.
[29] Ibid., pp. 293-303 and pp. 306-09.

of the drive there was scarcely any mention of it in the pages of The Times.

Vicker gives us a few particulars on the campaign. One can hope that they are accurate. In Doncaster, a thriving industrial town of 80,000 where Labour predominated, 50,000 pamphlets were distributed ~~only~~ along with application blanks. That drive netted 2,426 additional members. In Wimbledon, the Conservative Party membership was increased from 4,853 to 9,265.[30] This was the approximate percentage of increase which would have had to have been achieved all over Britain if Lord Woolton's goal was realized.

Mr. Churchill made a spectacular speech to a great throng at a Conservative Party Fete at Luton Hoo on June 26, 1948. He said that the crowd was "...the largest I have ever addressed in my life." It would have been only natural for him to crow over the success of the money and membership drives, but he did not do so. He mentioned Lord Woolton only in a passing reference to his role as Minister of Food in the Coalition. He did not refer to the "Fighting Fund" at all. He mentioned briefly some reasons for confidence on the part of the Tories. He said, "...we may indeed rejoice at the continued regathering of the strength of the Conservative Party....This can be seen in our local organizations, in our finances...in our membership which, although the recruiting campaign was started only a short time ago, is now over two millions...."[31] This was indeed a very casual way to refer to what was, if true, a stupendous achievement! At the end of the drive it was announced that the party membership stood at 2,249,031.[32] This announcement was not carried in any edition of The Times in July, 1948, however.

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30 Vicker, pp. 172-76. 31 Churchill, Europe Unite, p. 353.
32 Hoffman, p. 90.

In a speech which he made to his constituency on July 10, 1948, Mr. Churchill said that he had "...through the exertions of my friends and supporters, 11,000 subscribing members...." He added, "We never had half that number when our constituency was double as big." He mentioned that "...whereas we had...750,000 officially subscribing members of the Tory Party a few years ago, we now have half a million gathered in the last few weeks."[33] Was he referring only to the end of the membership drive, or to the whole ten weeks of the campaign? It is all so very oblique. This makes it very difficult to say absolutely that the million new members were added to the party's roll. One is simply not convinced of it.

At the Annual Party Conference in October, 1948, Mr. Churchill delivered a fifteen page address which was devoted almost entirely to foreign affairs and anti-socialism. He made no mention of the recovery of the Tory Party.[34] Lord Woolton told the delegates, "Our party is revivified." Speaking of the needs of the future he said,

> In the autumn we are launching a scheme to help the constituencies in the training of those volunteers whose work is so vital to the winning of the next election....A team of instructor-demonstrators has been trained for each area in order that expert guidance may be given in this work of canvassing, on which, more that the speeches of our leaders, more than the resolutions of any conference, the results of the next election will depend.[35]

The party was now ready to perfect the Marked Register and train the army of men and women who could exploit its many practical advantages at election time. The Tories already had a considerable start on this. They had gained a great deal of information on the character of the electorate in their fund and membership drives. Lord Woolton had said

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33 Churchill, Europe Unite, p. 369. 34 Ibid., pp. 409-24.
35 Vicker, p. 176.

repeatedly that the party should concentrate on person-to-person contacts on the doorsteps and in the parlors of the homes of Britain. He called the attempt to perfect the Marked Register "Operation Knocker." An attempt was made to gain a precise knowledge of the political proclivities of every voter in the nation. British political parties had long employed the concept of a Marked Register, but they were often not kept up-to-date. It was Woolton's intention that the Tories keep their's current by frequent calls, and not just at election time. Once completed the Register would be the backbone of the electoral effort in the associations. The first object was to establish a friendly and casual relationship with the household--projecting the Tory viewpoint in a low key if at all. The canvassers were warned not to argue with the voters. Persuaion, in the first instance, was to be strictly secondary to the ascertaining of the precise political sentiments of every voter in the constituency. The voters would then be marked as "For," "Against," or "Doubtful." Near to election time especially trained workers would be sent around to work on the doubtful. It was considered a waste of time to try to do anything with the "Against" category.

A corollary to the Marked Register was a good car pool available on election day. The Central Office put great emphasis on this aspect of successful campaign tactics. Special training booklets were prepared to explain how to organize a car pool and the legal regulations governing it. From the voter canvass the constituency organization knew which of its potential voters needed or wanted transportation to the polls. It was simply a matter of good planning to see that these people were picked up on election day at the proper time and taken to vote. In this, as in so many other phases of British electioneering, little was left

to last minute improvisation. The hard work necessary for a good Marked Register paid dividends during the relatively short campaign period. The association knew where concentrated and sustained effort would pay of and where it would not. They had established a good relationship with their supporters and knew where they were, so it only remained to make certain that these people actually voted, either by arranging transportation or calling on them by phone or in person on election day to urge them to vote. A thorough knowledge of the party faithful would also insure that those who could not get to the polls in person voted by post. This was a very important factor in the Elections of 1950 and 1951. Woolton wrote, praising "Operation Knocker," "This was the power that revolutionized the Party."[36]

Where the Marked Register was well prepared the accuracy of its content was truly amazing,

> According to the head of the Organization Department of the Conservative Central Office, ninety-five per cent of the constituency electorate at a recent by-election was canvassed, and the plurality of the winning candidate--in this case Labour--was forecast within one hundred votes of the result... two weeks before the General Election of 1950, the Department predicted the result in the House within three or four seats of the actual outcome.[37]

This was truly an amazing standard of organizational thoroughness and efficiency. This attention to the mundane details of organization was the real secret of Lord Woolton's success as Party Chairman.

Three important political areas, youth, local government, and the trades unions, had been given some attention before Lord Woolton became Chairman; but in ~~this~~ These as in so many other realms, he stimulated activity. Some tentative moves had been made toward the formation of a young conservatives' organization in the years just before the war. At first

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[36] Woolton, p. 337.

[37] Samuel Beer, "The Conservative Party of Great Britain," The Journal of Politics, XIV (February, 1952), p. 59.

it was called the Junior Organization. This was obviously a poor name. Between November, 1945 and March, 1946 it was termed the Young Conservative Union. At the latter date it was designated as the Young Conservative Organization--generally known as the Young Conservatives or the Y. C.'s.[38] A new title was the signal for a drive to make the Tory youth movement stronger and more effective. A national advisory committee was established to supervise the Y. C. activity as well as twelve area committees. The dynamic Anthony Nutting was appointed as chairman of the Y. C. O. At the Party Conference in October, 1946 it was announced that there were 795 Y. C. branches in 429 constituencies.[39] By 1949 this had been expanded to 2,375 branches with a total membership of 160,433. Thereafter, membership increased less quickly.[40] Leon Epstein saw social pull as one of the main reasons for the success of the movement:

> The social pull as an element in the success of the Young Conservatives becomes readily apparent in any first hand observation of the associations. Ideology may be the basic inspiration for the organization and much of its leadership, but no one would deny that the mass of the membership is attracted by the consequent social opportunities. This is not so simple as joining in order to attend Young Conservative dances. There is also the chance, greatly valued in middle class circles, of mingling with the upper crust of local society....No doubt social climibing serves similar political purposes elsewhere, but the British Conservative Party has thoroughly systematized the process.[41]

At party conferences the Y. C.'s were numerous and vocal--sometimes too much so to suit the party elders. Nonetheless, the party leaders deliberately expanded the influence of the Y. C. O., giving it two of every seven constituency representatives at the annual party conferences. Considering that many of them were not old enough to vote in national elections and that they were only 1% of the total vote received by the

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38 Hoffman, pp. 74-5. 39 Ibid. 40 Ibid., p. 118.

41 Leon Epstein, "The Politics of British Conservatism," The American Political Science Review, XLVIII (March, 1954), p. 41.

party at the previous General Election, it is astonishing that the Tories would grant them such a large bloc of votes.[42] Moreover, they were given a good deal of political leverage in the local associations, where they provided much of the muscle and energy for such tasks as the voter canvass.[43] Epstein says that the Conservative Party was better served by its youth organization than was Labour: "...in membership and in active participation, the Young Conservatives operated on a much greater scale than the counterpart Labour Youth Movement, which customarily displayed a left-wing deviationism that was more a nuisance than an aid to the Labour Party."[44] The Young Conservatives ruffled a few feathers too, particularly in the immediate post-war conventions.

Closely allied with this appeal to youth in general was the effort to present the case for conservatism on college campuses. Here was an area where Labour was strongly entrenched. Lord Woolton said that "... within two years we had become the dominant political party in the universities. I found nothing more encouraging than the overcrowded audiences that I had in the Union buildings, both at Oxford and Cambridge, when...I put before them the views of the modern Conservative."[45] Epstein supports this contention:

> ...it is not surprising to find teachers at Oxford and Cambridge remarking that politically inclined students have been showing a more pronounced Tory preference that was true in the 1930's. It is still too soon to say that the trend to the Left, so discernable among intellectuals before and after World War II, has been reversed....The Conservative Political Centre...has produced a sophisticated educational program, and, along with the well-developed party research departments, has furnished employment to aspiring intellectuals often on their way to parliamentary careers.[46]

Whatever the reasons, there were encouraging signs for the Tories on the university campuses. In October, 1947, a no-confidence resolution against the Government was carried by the Student Union of Cambridge--

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[42] Epstein, p. 41. [43] Hoffman, p. 119. [44] Epstein, p. 41.
[45] Woolton, pp. 337-38. [46] Epstein, p. 29.

642 votes to 242. A month later a motion was carried at Cambridge to the effect that the Union would welcome the return of a Conservative Government. The vote was 507 to 262. There was a mock election held at Leeds University in February, 1948. The Tory candidate received 854 votes to 494 for Labour, and 389 for the Liberal. On January 22, 1948, the Oxford Union carried, by a vote of 393 to 278, the motion: "...this house would welcome the return of a Conservative administration." Similar motions were carried at the London School of Economics, University College London, University College Southampton, and at the Universities of Birmingham, Durham, and Bristol. With considerable justification the Central Committee of the Federation of University Conservative and Unionist Associations was able to report, in April, 1948, "There have been definite signs of a change of political faith throughout the universities...."[47] When Emanuel Shinwell attacked Churchill in an address at Oxford University he was wildly heckled. Police had to be called in to restore order and to clear a way to his car.[48]

One major development of the Woolton era, which ties in with the above, was the establishment, in the spring of 1948, of the Conservative College of the North--often called Swinton College after Lord Swinton, from whom the premises were obtained.[49] It was opened as "...the staff college of the party," according to the Conference Report of 1948. It was located in beautiful country near Ripon in Yorkshire. The building was a Victorian castle complete with towers and battlements. It was a perfect spot for a low-cost weekend of study and recreation. The majority of courses lasted from Friday evening to Sunday evening, but there were

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47 Hoffman, p. 118. 48 The Times, October 11, 1948, p. 6.
49 Vicker, pp. 104-05.

many mid-week programs. In the summer, month-long courses were organized to serve agents and prospective candidates for Parliament. Special conferences were organized in such areas as local government, youth, women, trades unions, etc. All-inclusive fees ranged from three guineas for a weekend course to thirty-three guineas for a seven weeks period. Quarters were available in the castle for sixty-five students and the staff. The facility was in use most of the year. Sports, sightseeing, and social events were mixed with lectures in order to attract and please a wide range of people. It was reported to the Executive Committee that between July of 1948 and July of 1949 almost 2,000 people attended the college and that forty-two courses were held.[50] Other Conservative Colleges were planned.

Teachers were not forgotten. In March, 1947, the Conservative and Unionist Teachers' Association was formed, and within a year area committees were established. Membership drives were launched with some success. The first annual conference of this new organization was held in March, 1948. Slightly more than 300 delegates attended. R. A. Butler was elected as president. In June, 1948 the Teachers' Association started its own quarterly magazine, The Right Angle.[51]

In 1944 a Local Government Advisory Committee was established, comprised of three representatives from each of the twelve party areas. Nothing much was done to prepare the Conservative Party for the municipal elections of November, 1945. The tide against Toryism was still flowing at that date with the result that the party lost 514 seats and won only 35. The Socialists gained 1,011 seats while losing only 23. Independent candidates and Liberals account for the disparity in the

[50] Vicker, pp. 104-05 and Hoffman, p. 118.

[51] Vicker, p. 192.

figures.[52] In former years the tendency had been for the Central Office and the party leadership to remain aloof from purely local races. Moreover, the party had actually adopted a policy of urging non-partisanship in local politics. In September, 1945, the Executive Committee, one of the most powerful bodies within the structure of the party, adopted a resolution which marked the beginning of a new policy:

> ...as the Socialist Party have now made it impossible to exclude party politics from local government elections, the Conservative Party organization should take a full and effective part in all contested local government elections; and that whilst the Conservative Party does not seek to control the independent judgment of the candidates when elected to local authorities, it is as a general rule desirable that candidates receiving the support of the party should stand as Conservatives or as members of parties co-operating with the Conservative Party.[53]

Ralph Assheton appointed Herbert Brabin as Local Government Officer at the Central Office. Brabin initiated a series of Area Conferences on local government problems. It was reported to the annual conference in October, 1946 that successful meetings had been held in various parts of the country and that the way was being prepared for a more successful effort in local politics. It was further stated that the area conferences on local government would become a regular pattern of operation in order to maintain close and direct contact between the Central Office and those adherents who were active in local government. Assheton was in this, as in so many other areas of concern to the party, preparing the way for the success of the Woolton era. In his memoir, however, Lord Woolton made it appear that the Local Government Department was created under his administration.[54] Strangely, Assheton's name is mentioned only once in Woolton's memoir, and that incidentally. Hoffman claims ~~that it was~~

[52] Vicker, p. 178. [53] Hoffman, p. 68. [54] Woolton, p. 341.

that it was largely as a result of Lord Woolton's influence that the Tory Party was persuaded to launch a full-scale effort in the sphere of local government, but he may have come to this view from reading Woolton's memoir.[55] Woolton did inaugurate an annual conference on local government to meet the day before the annual party conference began.[56] Lord Woolton gave the party a good slogan for its drive to win more local seats: "Town Hall and not Whitehall." In his speeches he often developed the theme that the Conservative Party's political creed contained a great belief in the virtues of decentralization.[57] He claims also, to have attracted three extremely able politicians to serve in the Local Government Department: Mr. Walter Elliot, Sir Geoffrey Hutchinson, and Mr. Derek Walker-Smith.[58]

The Tories did not neglect to launch a special magazine for this new movement. The Councillor was born in June, 1948.[59] Commonsense advice was dispensed for the faithful in this new publication:

> There is more support to be gained for the party when a council (with a Conservative majority) provides a much needed recreational playing field, than by the distribution of countless leaflets. A canvasser may give a householder ten good reasons for joining the Conservative Party, but fail to convince. A Conservative councillor who sees that the plumbing drains are put right, or that the garbage cans are emptied regularly will succeed. Looked at from a purely party point of view there is an immense advantage in fighting these contests as a party.[60]

Contesting local elections on a partisan basis had two distinct advantages beyond this: it would keep the party machine in fighting trim and it would groom popular and able candidates who might in the future stand for Parliament.

The success of the Conservative Youth Organization neatly dovetailed with the Tory effort in local government. In the municipal elections of 1949 about 300 members of the Y. C. O. stood as candidates.[61]

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55 Hoffman, pp. 83-4. 56 Woolton, p. 341. 57 Ibid., p. 342.
58 Ibid. 59 Vicker, p. 182. 60 Ibid., p. 184. 61 Hoffman, p. 119.

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IT KEEPS HIM AWAKE

The Conservative Party did not win a single seat won by Labour in 1945 in a by-election contest in the four-and-a-half years that followed. The Tories did not, however, lose a seat which they had retained in 1945. It was a source of great embarrassment to the party that they could not, in spite of the condition of the country, win a Labour seat in a by-election. Mr. Churchill campaigned personally in a number of them--all to no avail. The Tory candidate did usually increase the Conservative share of the poll compared to 1945.

Even though they strove mightily the Conservative Party could not win a seat from Labour in the fairly numerous by-elections. Its success in local government elections was the first really heartening sign that the voters were returning to the Tory fold. In November, 1947 there were local elections held in 393 municipalities in England and Wales. The Tories gained 625 seats and Labour lost 652.[62] In the council elections of April 3-5, 1949, the Conservative Party showed a gain of 360 and a loss of 19 seats, compared with a loss of 362 and a gain of 69 for Labour.[63] The most spectacular Tory coup of this period was their triumph in the elections for the London County Council--next to the House of Commons the most important governmental body in Great Britain. In the old L. C. C. there had been 90 Socialists, 28 Tories and two Liberals. After the election there were 64 Socialists, 64 Tories, and one Liberal. The Conservatives polled more votes than did Labour: 1,526,000 to 1,404,805. The Liberals received 37,266 votes. However, only 39% of the electorate went to the polls.[64] Lord Woolton commented, "This splendid victory, which ends 15 years of Socialist domination at County Hall, has a national significance....it is a truer reflection of opinion that any Parliamentary by-election."[65] The Times agreed, "The evidence of a decided shift away from the Labour Party in local affairs is not confined to London or Middlesex. It is discernable throughout the local elections of recent months....the Labour Party has had a very rude shock."[66] Labour was allowed to name the Chairman of the L. C. C. In November, 1949 a by-election for the North Kensington seat on the L. C. C. was won by Labour giving them an absolute majority of one.

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62 Churchill, Europe Unite, p. 188. 63 The Times, April 10, 1949, p. 4.
64 The Times, April 9, 1948, p. 4. 65 Ibid. (my italics)
66 Ibid., p. 5.

Final tabulations for the local government elections of 1949 showed a net Tory gain of 1,615 and a net loss for Labour of 1,172.[67] It is not surprising that the Chairman of the Local Government Advisory Committee claimed that "The Labour Party has suffered a major political reverse. These results show an unmistakable change in public feeling which cannot be explained away."[68] The fact that a relatively small percentage of the electorate bothered to vote robs these statistics of some, but not all of their meaning.

Lord Woolton, writing in 1959, professed himself dissatisfied by the results of the Conservative effort in local government:

> All this work met with only partial success. It could have been of infinitely more value if the ranks of the Conservative Party had produced as much enthusiasm for local government as is shown by the Socialists....the fact that, at this present time, so many city and county councils are in the hands of the Socialists is due to the politically culpable negligence of the Conservative voters.[69]

The appeal made by the Tories to the trade unionists did not enjoy great success.[70] Lord Woolton established a Conservative Trade Union Council and appointed Mr. Eric Adamson to head it. It was hoped that this organization could build up some resistance among union members to the political role of their leaders. In 1946 the Parliamentary Conservative Party waged a determined, but of course unsuccessful, fight against the repeal of the Trades Disputes Act, which included among other items, the provision that union members had to make a formal act of contracting into the political levy of the unions. The Labour Party changed this to contracting out; which, it was thought, the working men would be less likely to do. Here was an issue where the Tories

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67 Vicker, pp. 185-6. 68 Ibid., p. 186. 69 Woolton, p. 342.
70 Hoffman, p. 119.

and independent minded union members had a legitimate grievance. The Conservatives said that they would go back to the old system if returned to power but they never did. The party knew that it could never command the support of the union leaders, or even a sizeable share of the membership, but it never launched a full scale attack on the irresponsible acts of the labor movement, nor did it threaten the unions with anything but a few unspecified reforms which would be arrived at in consultation with the union leaders. The Conservative Party was perhaps too careful in its approach to the problems created by British unionism. The Tories no doubt realized that if they were returned to power they would have to handle the unions with circumspection or else suffer the consequences of labor disturbances run out of control. (Labor always claimed that with their special contacts they would have more luck in controlling the unions, i.e., getting them to behave.)

Eric Adamson regarded it as very important that the Trade Union Council should not launch a vigorous recruitment drive but that it should depend mostly on voluntary participation. The unions were not to be offended. There were not, furthermore, any formal links between the constituency associations and the Council. By October, 1948 it was employing twenty full-time and two part-time field workers. By that date 168 local Conservative Trade Union Councils had been formed and approximately 200 factory groups. The total enrollment was 6,637. By 1951 this had risen to 12,000, but this represented only about 25% of the party's goal in this sphere.[71] It had, obviously, a symbolic significance which far exceeded its numerical strength. One of Disraeli's proudest boasts was that the Tory Party had numerous adherents among working

[71] Hoffman, p. 120.

men. Mr. Churchill often claimed the same thing with great relish.

Another of Lord Woolton's innovations was the establishment of the Candidates Association, under the chairmanship of J. P. L. Thomas. After the defeat of 1945 the party had to adopt 329 new candidates. Weekend meetings of the Candidates Association were held in various parts of the country, allowing the adopted candidates to meet each other, listen to party leaders and veterans, hear lectures on the problems of their kind, and learn about party policy, publications, plans, etc. It was also arranged to have these prospective M. P.'s assigned to sitting members for personal instruction and advice. Lord Woolton said of these men and women, "They were the hope of our side--we fostered them and met with a grateful response. Sitting in the gallery of the Commons after we had won the election in1951, I thought that J. P. L. Thomas had much reason for pride; we had a worthy group of new members and they amply repaid us for all the trouble we took in training them for the job."[72]

Lord Woolton was not a member of the "Give'm Hell" school when it came to political propaganda. He insisted that the Conservative Party play down its opposition to the measures of the Socialists and accentuate their own program. He tried to persuade Tory speakers to avoid dealing in personalities and engaging in stunt electioneering. He could, of course, see to it personally that the publications, posters, etc. of the party reflected ~~this~~ his view of the purpose of party propaganda. In this connection he said, "I myself went through, with critical care, all the election literature published by the Central Office, in order to ensure that we used propaganda for what I conceived to be its right purpose....Experience in three elections has confirmed my conviction

[72] Woolton, pp. 346-7.

that whilst political abuse of one's opponents 'tickles the fancy' of one's friends, it strengthens the loyalties of the opposition."[73] I have read carefully a great many publications of the Conservative Party and I can testify to their extremely high quality. They were well written and well published. The party produced an enormous variety of publications on a large number of subjects. A number of these are noted in the bibliography of this thesis; but, from every indication, this group forms but a small part of the total output of the Central Office, the Research Department, and the Conservative Political Centre in the period 1945-51.

One of the most revolutionary aspects of Lord Woolton's program for the re-vitalization of the Conservative Party was his insistence that candidates for Parliament should not, from their personal funds, finance, or largely finance, their local associations. Woolton wrote, "I noticed that the organization of the party was weakest in those places where a wealthy candidate made it unnecessary for the members to collect small subscriptions. I decided to put this problem to the Executive Committee...and ask them to appoint a committee to advise on it."[74] Both the Executive Committee and the Central Council passed on it and submitted it to the annual conference of October, 1947. The Brighton Conference of October, 1947 passed two important resolutions. The first was expressing approval of the plan to appoint a special committee to look into the problem of the financial arrangements of candidates. The second resolution suggested that the local associations assume the responsibility of contributing funds to the Central Office. This resolution did not carry with it any suggestion for a committee, but one was

[73] Woolton, pp. 353-4. [74] Ibid., p. 345.

appointed anyway: the Committee on Party Finance, or Committee A as it was called. Committee B was the Committee on the Financial Arrangements of Candidates. There was a third important committee established in the same period, Committee C on the Employment of Agents.

The Committee on Party Finance was chaired by Mr. Henry Brooke, leader of the Conservative members on the L. C. C. Two of the more prominent members, among twelve, were Mr. Anthony Nutting, M. P. and leader of the Young Conservatives; and Mr. G. Spencer Sumners, who was chairman of the drive to add a million new members to the party. This Committee held ten meetings between December, 1947 and May, 1948. Twelve witnesses gave oral evidence and a questionnaire was sent in January, 1948 to the Chairmen of all the 534 Constituency Associations in England and Wales inviting them to submit any views they wished on the practical methods by which the Brighton resolution could be implemented. Either the associations were indifferent, derelict, or opposed. The Committee received only 150 replies.[75]

Committee B on the Financial Arrangements of Candidates was chaired by Mr. W. Robson Brown. Two of the more prominent members, among ten, were Mr. Hugh Molson, M. P., and Miss Patricia Hornsby-Smith who later became an M. P. and a prominent and very attractive spokeswoman of the party in Parliament and on the radio. Between January and May, 1948, the Committee met five times and heard evidence from individuals "...whose experience entitles them to be regarded as experts on the financial problems of the actual or intending Member of Parliament."[76]

Committee C on the Employment of Agents was chaired by Mr. Arthur Colegate. Mr. J. Boyd-Carpenter, M. P. was perhaps the most prominent

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75 Interim and Final Reports of The Committee on Party Organisation, 1948 and 1949, p. 15.

76 Ibid., p. 11.

of the fifteen members of the committee. It met on nine occasions between October 16, 1947 and May 26, 1948. Its attention was directed to the feasibility of the central employment of agents, their salaries, training, examination, and accomodation.[77]

On March 17, 1948 the Executive Committee reported to the Central Council that the committees were functioning and that, "...on receipt of the reports...it was proposed to appoint a Special Committee on Party Organization to examine the whole organization of the party."[78] This committee was in operation by June, 1948. Its purpose was to accept and approve the reports of the three primary committees, A, B, and C, and to range over the whole structure of the Conservative Party and make recommendations. The entire report was to be then submitted to the Annual Conference in October, 1948 for final adoption.

The Rt. Hon. Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, K. C., M. P. was named chairman of this blue ribbon body. Mr. Vyvyan Adams was appointed Secretary. The twelve members of this committee were drawn from the Executive Committee of the National Union. They were: The Rt. Hon. the Earl Castle Stewart, M. C., J. P.; Mr. Henry Brooke; Mr. W. Robson Brown; Mr. Arthur Colegate; Mr. John Hay; The Hon. Mrs. Hornyold-Strickland, M. B. E., J. P.; Mr. Geoffrey Hutchinson, M. C., K. C.; Mr. B. J. Lambert, J. P.; Mr. R. Donald Scott; Mr. Geoffrey Summers, C. B. E., J. P., D. L.; Mrs. John Warde; and Sir Herbert G. Williams.[79] In reviewing the names of all the members of these committees, with their titles, orders, and ranks, one is aware of the nature of the people who really rule the Conservative Party. In spite of all their talk about democratizing the party, it remained largely a creature of the upper class.

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[77] Interim and Final Reports, p. 7. [78] Hoffman, p. 92.

[79] Interim and Final Reports, p. 3.

The Committee on Party Finance grappled with the problem of how to get the associations to pay monies into a central fund. Its first recommendation was that the party must publish its accounts so that the membership might gain a complete knowledge of where the money came from, in what amounts, and how it was spent. "The advantages of secrecy are outweighed by the disadvantages of failing to tell Conservative supporters frankly what bill they must foot if they want the country properly governed." The committee admitted that "In the past no information about the expenditure or income or requirements at the Centre has been available to responsible Constituency Officers, Members of Parliament, Candidates or ordinary members of the party."[80] This was quite an admission! In the future the Treasurer of the Party was directed to publish an annual financial statement.

Committee A concluded that there was a gap of some £200,000 a year between the annual income of the party at the Centre and the amount which was needed. "The very high level of taxation prevents," the report said, "the Treasurer of the Party from relying on the expectation of large individual contributions, even if that were desirable."[81] The committee handled very gingerly the matter of how the money was to be raised--obviously fearing a reaction in the associations to so many demands at once. It decided on a quota system. It would have required a levy of six pence for every vote garnered by the Tories in the Election of 1945 to realize the whole of £200,000, but, they thought, "...it would be a mistake to make the immediate aim too high; <u>better to leave the gap not fully closed for a time, than to imperil the whole machine</u> by trying to start it up too fast. We therefore recommend a basic figure

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[80] <u>Interim and Final Reports</u>, p. 15. [81] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 17.

of 3d. per Conservative vote at the outset."[82] The committee rejected the idea of a flat rate everywhere and came up with a rather complicated quota system. It was suggested that where the Conservative vote was twelve to six or above over Labour, the association would contribute 6d. per Tory vote to the Centre. It would be left "...to the Associations concerned the question whether they can help the Party to close the gap by offering more."[83] The amount to be contributed ranged downward. Where a Tory candidate received only one-third as many votes as his Labour opponent the association concerned was only expected to pay ½d. If a Conservative candidate won a constituency by 24,000 to 12,000 the assessment would be £600. If a Tory was beaten in a contest with a vote of 12,000 to 36,000 the association's quota would be only £25. The report of Committee A was at pains to say that the formula would not be rigidly applied, "...but treated only as a means of arriving at first approximations, which must be adjusted by discussion in the light of local circumstances." Finally, "The scheme is voluntary. Its basis is mutual confidence based on full information. Given that, we feel sure of the response....No sanctions should be applied against an Association that fails to reach its quota, except encouragement to do better next time."[84]

Lord Woolton spent more money at the Central Office than was customary in the past and this could not, apparently, be raised in the traditional Tory manner of tapping a handful of rich contributors. The "Fighting Fund" idea could be repeated, but the membership might tire of constant dunning and exhortation. The crusading atmosphere of the first appeal would inevitable dissipate. A regular supply of money

82 Interim and Final Reports, p. 15. (my italics)
83 Ibid., p. 19. 84 Ibid. (my italics)

which could be counted on was needed at the center. The associations could not be forced to provide the money--they had to be persuaded. Lord Woolton wisely had a "democratic" committee established to advise on the problem. They went through the motions of consulting the party, arrived a set of small goals to be collected through consultation and without any coercion. The most important thing was to establish the principle that the constituencies were responsible for raising money for the Central Office.[85] This had not been true in the past.

Committee B found that 47% of Conservative prospective candidates and M. P.'s contributed less than £100 yearly to their associations and that about the same percentage paid less than half their election expenses.[86] This seems very vague. In moving that the annual conference of 1948 accept the report of his committee, Henry Brooke said that there were still too many associations which denied an interview to a potential candidate who had not promised in advance to pay half his election expenses--perhaps £400--and to pay a subscription of £100 a year to the association. He added that the party should be one in which individual merit counted--not money.[87] If this be true, then it meant that over half of the prospective and actual M. P.'s paid more than £100 annually to their associations, and more than £400 toward election expenses. This was a very damning admission.

In view of the above, the recommendations of Committee B were quite sweeping. "We recognise," the report said, "that the National Executive and the Party intend that means should be found to remove financial obstacles which prevent suitable individuals from putting their names forward and constituency associations from selecting the best men and

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[85] Hoffman, pp. 99-100. [86] The Times, October 6, 1948, p. 4.
[87] The Times, October 7, 1948, p. 4.

women available.[88] Most of the candidates for the Election of 1950 were already adopted, but any new adopted candidates would have to come under the strictures of the report. Where there were adopted candidates, the recommendations of the committee would take effect after the next General Election or any by-election anterior thereto. Here is the heart of Committee B's report:

> (1) The entire election expenses of Conservative Candidates in every constituency shall be the responsibility of the Constituency Associations (including in suitable cases the Candidates' personal expenses not exceeding £100) and no subscription shall be made directly or indirectly by the Candidate to the fund for the statutory election expenses.
>
> (5) Candidates may, by arrangement with their Constituency Associations, make nominal subscriptions each year, but the subscriptions shall in no case exceed £25; the annual subscriptions of Members of Parliament to their associations shall in no case exceed £50.
>
> (6) In no circumstances shall the question of an annual subscription be mentioned by any constituency selection committee to any Candidate before he has been selected....[89]

If the new regulations were not observed sanctions would be applied: "...it would not be possible to give support to such a Candidate, either by procuring the usual letter from the Leader of the Party, by the supply of Parliamentary speakers, by a financial grant towards election expenses, or by Central Office assistance."[90] There was no mention of how these regulations might be policed, or whether they would be.

Lord Woolton said that "...the change was revolutionary...in my view it did more than any single factor to save the Conservative Party."[91] Hoffman does not believe that the adoption of the report resulted in any significant change in the character of the body of Tory M. P.'s or candidates. In the three elections of the 1950's the Conservative

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[88] Interim and Final Reports, p. 13. [89] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

[90] Ibid., p. 11. [91] Woolton, p. 346.

candidates continued to conform to the traditional image of the party.[92] A few working-class candidates were adopted in some of the hopeless constituencies. Perhaps, in the enthusiasm of those years, when the party was out of office, the democratic intentions of the report were sincerely meant. Hoffman felt that "...the real effect of the recommendations...was not so much upon the type of candidates chosen...as upon the associations themselves. Denied the easy income traditionally provided by wealthy candidates, the backward, least efficient, constituency associations were now forced to improve their financial machinery in order to meet their election expenses."[93] Unfortunately, this appears to be only an opinion on Hoffman's part as he does not cite any source for his belief. Unless one could know how diligently the party sought to enforce the terms of the report one could not make a judgment on its effectiveness. One would also need to make a thorough study of the character of Tory candidates in the Elections of 1951, 1955, 1959, etc, and compare them with the past. This would be a very formidable undertaking, but necessary before a categorical statement could be made on the effect of the recommendations of Committee B on the party. Anyway, the intent of the committee and the party was another manifestation of the Tory Democracy, and this was what was wanted in 1949.

Committee C was given the task of making recommendations concerning the employment of agents and organizers, with a view of upgrading this vital section of the party. The committee almost certainly favored the central employment and assigning of agents, but found almost no support for such a radical change in the traditional pattern. The

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[92] Hoffman, pp. 96-7. [93] Ibid., p. 97.

Central Office, in this as in other realms, could not order changes which the associations would not of their own accord accept. The committee's report said, "It is strongly urged by its advocates that Central Employment would appear to be required if the most efficient distribution of Agents is to be achieved. But...there is at present too large a body of opposition to bring such a scheme within the bounds of possibility."[94]

A number of changes were adopted, however, in the areas of salary, pensions, and methods of training and examination. The following minimum salary scale was accepted by the Conservative Party:

Certificated Organiser..... £400

Certificated Organiser in sole charge of a constituency.. £450

Certificated Agent on first appointment..... £500

Certificated Agent after experience in a General Election £600-800

Agents were able to look forward to an annual increment of £25 up to a maximum of £800. Then, "...further increases should be paid in accordance with his merits and the special circumstances that may apply."[95]

The pension plan was not ungenerous. The annual premiums of the scheme were to be paid half by the agent and half by the association. After the retirement the pension would be at the rate of 2% per annum of the total salary earned by an agent during his career. If the total salary earned was £15,000, then the pension would be £25 per month for the rest of the agent's life.[96] A pension of £200-300 a year plus what could be received from national insurance would easily provide a comfortable living. The party wished to encourage agents to stay with it--experienced agents were prize possessions. A salary of

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[94] Interim and Final Reports, p. 7. [95] Ibid., p. 8.

[96] Ibid.

£800 was certainly more than most Britons could hope to make. The matter of accomodation was briefly touched on, "A number of constituency associations have recently bought houses for the occupations of their agents and we recommend that wherever the problem arises it should, if possible, be solved in this way."[97]

The Central Office failed to gain control over the appointment and assignment of agents, but it did, through the committee's recommendation, acquire the power to approve those prospective agents who would be nominated for training in the future.[98] This, it would appear, gave the center a high degree of control over the process of selection.

The minimum age limit for an agent had been twenty-one--the committee fixed this at twenty-three. The period of preliminary training had been one month--it was raised to three. In the past an agent had had to spend six months as an apprentice. This was increased to one year. There had been a week's intensive course of lectures prior to the final examination of new agents. This was raised to two weeks.[99]

The Interim Report was debated and accepted at the annual conference of 1948. There was only one modification. The following resolution was carried with only minor opposition: "That this Conference approves the Interim Report in principle on the understanding that no Constituency is committed to the quota system until it has been directly consulted."[100] Mr. Churchill, in his speech to the Conference, did not make any reference whatsoever to the work of the three committees.[101] The Times, in its editorial on the Conference, expressed approval of the vigor which the party was showing: "...the Conservatives are on the hard way back after a great defeat....They are regrouping and staking

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[97] Interim and Final Reports, p. 10. [98] Ibid., p. 9.

[99] Ibid. [100] Ibid., p. 64. [101] Churchill, Europe Unite, pp. 409-24.

out claims afresh, trying to cast a policy and a programme in a new national mould."[102]

I do not propose to present in detail the recommendations of Sir David Maxwell Fyfe's Committee on Party Organisation. It urged the adoption of a number of changes throughout the structure of the party, but many of these seem comparatively minor. For example, "We recommend that the Chairman of each Area Women's Advisory Committee should be an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee...."[103] Or, "We recommend that the University (Graduates) Conservative and Unionist Associations should have two representatives on the Executive Committee."[104] Much more important was the proposal that "...Candidates should be approved by the Standing Advisory Committee on Parliamentary Candidates before their names are submitted to Constituency Association Selection Committees."[105] The Advisory Committee on Candidates was appointed by the Leader of the party and was directly responsible to him. The adoption of this recommendation gave the central leadership of the party a much greater degree of power in a very vital area. Associations could select a candidate whose name was not on the central list, but they would still have to get the approval of the Advisory Committee. Associations that selected candidates outside of the regulations were subject to stiff sanctions, the most important being that the candidate would get no letter of support from the Leader of the Party.

The most important thing that the Committee on Party Organisation accomplished was to delineate with greater clarity the structure of the Conservative Party and the relationships between the multitudinous departments and organizations within the party. There had been some confusion.

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102 The Times, October 6, 1948, p. 5. 103 Interim and Final Reports, p. 35.
104 Ibid., p. 58. 105 Ibid., p. 64.

The Interim Report was, as noted, accepted with one important modification by the party conference of October, 1948. The Final Report was approved by the Executive Committee on May 20, 1949, and by the Central Council on July 17, 1949. The final report did not, apparently, have to go back to an annual conference. At the time of publication of the Interim and Final Reports in August, 1949, it was noted that "The Associations are in general carrying out the recommendations which we...thought it right to make. The system of quotas has been accepted and is being operated....we observe that no Constituency has failed to observe our recommendations applicable to new Parliamentary Candidates selected after 31st December, 1948."[106] This would have been a very small group because, as has been noted, most prospective candidates for the forthcoming General Election had already been chosen. The rules would not apply to them until after that event.

The acceptance, in July, 1949, of the committee reports, and the publication of Tory policy for the coming election, The Right Road for Britain, virtually completed the new departures associated with the Woolton-Butler reconstruction of the Conservative Party. The next move was up to the Labour Government. The Tories were ready and waiting.

In 1948, The Times said, "The Conservative Party has many assets. It has its Carnot, its 'organizer of victory' in Lord Woolton, who has begun at the bottom in reshaping the party."[107] Such was his reputation!

After the Tory Party returned to power Lord Woolton held in their turn the following offices: Lord President of the Council, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Minister of Materials. His job was to close down the latter department and liquidate its stockpile of £160

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106 Interim and Final Reports, p. 26. 107 The Times, October 6, 1948, p. 5.

million in goods. He served, until his retirement, as Deptuty Leader of the House of Lords. From his memoir one gains the impression that he wanted the Chancellorship of the Exchequer.

After Churchill's retirement, Lord Woolton stayed on to help Eden fight the General Election of 1955. It was his third and last campaign. The Tory majority was fifty-nine, only one under the Chairman's pre-election forecast. Was this another vindication of the efficiency of Woolton's party machine and the Marked Register? He delivered his final speech to the party in the role of Chairman at the annual conference of 1955. In his farewell to the faithful he said,

> From the outset...I had no doubt as to what the Party needed. The problem was not primarily one of building up a well-oiled machine....The Conservative Party needed a revival of faith in its duty, and in its capacity to do that duty....the Party would have to be revitalized as a broad based democratic party, embracing all sections of society, and its inspiration drawn from the full meaning of the phrase 'Tory Democracy' We have made that phrase into a reality.[108]

If he had not actually made it into a reality, he had at least helped to create the impression of reality, which is almost as important.

He told the conference that they had, in Eden, a leader who, "...in his person and in his outlook symbolizes all that is meant by the new, the modern Conservative movement." He reminded them, however, that the party would be worthy of power only so long as it had "...a sense of care and responsibility for the old, the weak, the unfortunate, and for the children of the country."[109] Thus, the torch was passed to a new Leader and a new Chairman, Oliver Poole.

Woolton was, essentially, an old-fashioned figure with a Victorian's belief in free enterprise and a deep suspicion of big government, even when it was Tory, but he was motivated by powerful humanitarian sentiments.

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[108] Woolton, p. 421. [109] Ibid., p. 424.

He came late in life to serve the Conservative Party, which he only joined after the defeat of 1945, but he served it well. The net effect of his work and his program may have been less than he and others thought. There was certainly a great deal of illusion in it; but after a thorough reading of the press of the period I can say that the impact of the New Conservatism was powerful. The press appears to have taken it at face value. People believed that the Tory Party was under-going a fundamental change, and what people believe to be true, even if it is not, is as important as what is actually true--at least in the short-run. This is not meant to under-rate the Woolton achievement, but merely to suggest that it requires some qualification. The party had changed, but not fundamentally. However, the vigor which Woolton injected into the electioneering of the Conservative Party could not help but increase the party's chances in forthcoming elections. He was the only Tory Chairman in history to preside over three elections in which the party improved its position in Parliament each time.

# CHAPTER IV

# RICHARD AUSTIN BUTLER AND THE IDEOLOGICAL RE-ARMAMENT OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Keith Feiling observed that Conservatism "'...survives by a continual absorption of liberal ideas.'"[1] John Saloma concluded that "Individuals and elements favoring progressive party policies have found greater acceptance during periods when the party was defeated or demoralized."[2] Richard A. Butler was the man who, during the period 1945-51, mobilized the intellectual resources of the party, defined Tory policy in a number of areas, and secured in the end a more liberal and contemporary image for the party. He and Lord Woolton are the two men most identified with the reconstruction of the Conservative Party after the fiasco of 1945. Butler wrote, "'It is the task of the present generation of Conservatives to found our modern faith on the basis of two features of this age, namely the existence of universal adult suffrage and the acceptance by authority of the responsibility for ensuring a certain standard of living, of employment, and of security for all."[3] This was, in essence his program for the party after 1945.

Butler is the son of a distinguished English family which has

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1 John Selim Saloma, III, "British Conservatism and the Welfare State, An Analysis of the Policy Process Within the British Conservative Party" (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1961), p. 59.

2 Ibid., p. 517.

3 Leon D. Epstein, "Politics of British Conservatism," The American Political Science Review, XLVII (March, 1954), p. 33.

produced teachers, divines, colonial administrators, and politicians for many generations. His father, Sir Montague Butler, rose to a high position in the Indian Civil Service. R. A. Butler was born in India. When he returned from the East, Sir Montague was given the post of Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge. As with many important figures in British political history, R. A. Butler's rise was rapid--based on academic brilliance, family connections, and wealth. In October, 1921 he went up to Cambridge where his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had won firsts. At one time during his career as an under-graduate, both the M. P.'s for Cambridge were related to him and bore his name--an uncle, Sir Geoffrey Butler, and a second cousin, J. R. M. Butler, the late Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge. R. A. Butler took a "Double First" in modern languages and history, and followed his father's success by becoming President of the Union.

In April, 1926 he married Sydney Courtald, the daughter of one of the richest and most famous industrialists of the time. What followed could have been predicted by those familiar with "Life at the Top." In October, 1927, it was announced that the Conservative M. P. for Saffron Walden (the district in which was located the headquarters of the Courtald business empire) would not seek re-election. He had only held the seat since 1922. Within a week the local association decided to adopt as a prospective candidate none other than R. A. Butler. It has been, however, one of the hallmarks of Butler's political career to take very seriously his relations with Saffron Walden. Even after he became one of the leading politicians of the nation he continued to go back to the constituency almost every weekend, and he has not missed

the Saffron Walden New Year's Party once since 1928. The seat is a safe one for the Tories.[4]

His rise in the Conservative Party was astonishingly rapid for a young man of twenty-five. The formation of the National Government in 1931 gave him his first chance at an official position. He was appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary to Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India. Here one sees the great value of a family connection. His uncle, Sir Geoffrey, had been P. P. S. for Hoare in the Baldwin Government of 1925-29. This appointment was quite a piece of luck for the young Butler, because just at this juncture Indian affairs were moving to the center of the political stage.[5] In the following year Butler was promoted to the Treasury Bench as Under Secretary of State for India. The enactment of the Government of India Bill in 1935, over the vehement protests of Winston Churchill and his small band of Tory die-hards, was the chief monument of this period of Butler's career.

In February, 1938, after Eden's resignation, Chamberlain appointed Butler to the more exalted position of Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. This was an undeniable promotion, because Lord Halifax, being in the Lords, had to leave to Butler the task of explaining foreign policy and answering questions in the Commons. In this new position, however, he was exposed to the blistering criticism of those who were disenchanted with the Government's foreign policy. His evasion of embarrassing questions earned him the not entirely creditable nickname of "Stonewall Butler." Lloyd George called him "the artful dodger." He was one of the men of Munich. He did not, at least publically, rebel against Chamberlain's policies. His association with this period may

4 Ralph Harris, Politics Without Prejudice, A Political Appreciation of The Rt. Hon. Richard Austin Butler (London, 1956), pp. 11-43.

5 Ibid., p. 51.

have retarded his advance to the summit of the Conservative Party. One is not entirely convinced that Churchill liked him, but he was allowed to stay on as Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs until July 22, 1941. One colleague, looking back on Butler's career, said that he was so well cast as a junior minister that he would go on as a model under-secretary until he had to retire through old age.[6] He was, however, appointed President of the Board of Education in 1941. Cassandra, in the Daily Mirror, wrote that the only justification he could find for the promotion was that "Mr. Butler has been faithful and loyal and not markedly inept."[7]

The Presidency of the Board of Education often changed hands, and usually it was given to a non-entity of whom little was expected. In the midst of war, the liabilities of making a reputation in such an office appeared formidable indeed, yet this is exactly what Butler did. He fathered the famous Education Act of 1944. It was a complex and controversial piece of legislation, and it earned Butler a reputation as a skillful parliamentary manager and Tory reformer. The Act was so far-reaching in its proposals that Butler predicted it would take twenty years to be fulfilled. He took up the chairmanship of the Conservative Central Committee on Post-War Problems after the passage of the Education Act. In a speech which he made at the time he said, "...there must be great permanent changes after the war....We are fully aware of the social consciousness of the country and the abiding need for improving and extending opportunity."[8] Butler may have understood this, but, as was shown in Chapter I, Mr. Churchill did not. Butler's commitment to a reconstruction of Tory policy was not born amidst the debris of defeat.

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[6] Harris, p. 55. [7] Ibid., p. 60. [8] Ibid., p. 97.

In the Caretaker Government of June and July, 1945, Butler was Minister of Labour, with, for the first time, a seat in the Cabinet. In the Election of 1945, his majority in Saffron Walden, which had been almost 10,000 in 1935, fell to 1,158. In reference to the party's defeat, Butler commented, "We were shaken out of our lethargy and impelled to re-think our philosophy and re-form our ranks, with a thoroughness unmatched for a century."[9] His analysis of the defeat was: "I do not believe that at the last election many independent electors...voted for doctrinaire Socialism. I believe that many were misled because a positive alternative was not put before them with sufficient fervour."[10] His prescription for the party was: "We must understand that no Party in the country can with success, base itself on, or identify itself with, one social element or class. To be successful we have still to re-organize from top to bottom the social structure on which our Party rests."[11] Speaking of his own work of policy definition he said, "We are seeking to build a pioneering path between the extremes of rugged individualism and creeping bureaucracy...."[12]

Yet, in spite of the great services which he rendered the party in its effort to overcome the rejection of 1945, he was twice passed over for the premiership. Was it simply a case of the prophet being without honor in his own party, or was it a fundamental lack of personal appeal? Harris explains Butler's undoubtedly cold personality in this way: "Butler has schooled himself to play a definite part, usually that of a serious figure to the side of the public stage. In the process there has developed a pose that is not a projection but a contradiction of his natural self."[13] Harris thinks that the "double front"

[9] Harris, p. 93. [10] Ibid., p. 106. [11] Ibid., p. 127.
[12] Ibid., p. 131. [13] Ibid., p. 188.

is the result of his family ancestry and training. "His forbears were teachers, churchmen, and colonial administrators, not country gentlemen, soldiers of fortune, or industrial magnates. For such hired professionals it is essential to maintain a perfectly controlled attitude to the world-at-large....Thus if there is anything 'inhuman' about Butler's public personality, it can be seen as the result of superhuman self-control."[14] There are three other things which might be cited in the argument of why he failed to gain the premiership in 1957 and 1963. He was reported to have been very much against the Suez affair, and it is even thought that he winked at the Labour benches while defending the Government's policy. It is also said that he "...shows an alarming candour about his colleagues in private."[15] Furthermore, it was recently revealed that he told the Swedish Ambassador in 1940 that Britain must come to an accomodation with Germany, and that die-hards like Churchill should not be allowed to stand in the way.

In our admiration for the ideological re-armament of the Butler era, we are inclined to treat it as quite a revolutionary innovation for the Tory Party. Several writers are at pains to say otherwise, however. Their main point is that Conservative ideology has its origins in the pre-capitalist era; therefore, a doctrinal devotion to free enterprise and laissez-faire has never been so dominant a characteristic of the Tory Party as, for instance, American Republicans. In the nineteenth century the Conservatives were champions of state authority against the principles of classic liberalism. Toryism has produced a considerable body of reformers and thinkers who have argued that change

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[14] Harris, pp. 192-3. [15] Ibid., p. 187.

is necessary in a healthy society. As the great Burke said, "A society without the means for reformation is without the means of conservation." In the Butler era Burke was raised to the status of a prophet of the "New Conservatism." The British Welfare State, unlike the American New Deal, has not been the exclusive product of one party. All the parties have contributed to it, and the Tory claim in the process is an honorable one. The Conservative Party has never been fixed for very long in a reactionary stance.

A major premise of John Saloma's thesis is that the acceptance by the Tory Party of the modern Welfare State was conditioned and facilitated by the party's history--that it did not have to make any fundamental change in its ideology to come to terms with the new order of things after 1945. In his review of the history of the Conservative Party, Saloma sees a number of factors promoting the acceptance of the Welfare State. There was the old Tory ideal of security in an ordered society of classes led by an enlightened and paternalistic aristocracy. The gentry had always accepted the tradition that it was the responsibility of the State to provide subsistence for workmen who could not find work. The Young England Party of 1843-44, led by Lord John Manners, was an essentially romantic movement designed to re-awaken this benevolent spirit in a society which had undergone the Industrial Revolution. Disraeli's novel, Coningsby, was a statement of the articles of faith of this movement. The evangelical revival of the early nineteenth century, led by Wesley and Wilberforce, was essentially Tory in origin and spirit.[16]

The influence of Disraeli on the Tory Party was powerful. After

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[16] Saloma, pp. 87-98.

the defeat of 1867 he attempted to revive Conservatism in much the same way that Butler and Woolton did after 1945. He tried to provide an intellectual defense of Tory principles, define policy, and establish a better machinery for winning elections. It was Disraeli who founded the National Union and established the Central Office of the Conservative Party. He firmly tacked the banner of reform to the masthead of the party.[17] After the defeat of 1880, Lord Randolph Churchill, Sir Winston's father, tried to revive and carry on Disraeli's program, but with less success. Once in power Lord Salisbury pulled the rug from under Lord Randolph, causing him to say in disgust, "...it is an idle school boy's dream to suppose that the Tories can legislate--as I did stupidly."[18] After the party was firmly established in power, except for brief intervals, in the period 1885-1905, against a divided Liberal Party, it was A. J. Balfour who had the last word, "We cannot turn Radical even to preserve the Tory Party."[19] Conservatism has always been readier to accept liberal sentiments and talk about reform when out of power.

However, once Joseph Chamberlain and his followers were assimilated into the Conservative Party Lord Salisbury was persuaded to enact reforms. Saloma sees Chamberlain as a much more important figure than Lord Randolph in the tradition of Tory Democracy. Chamberlain's influence was reflected in the establishment of the County Councils on a democratic basis in 1888, and the provision of free primary education in 1891. The Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897 was largely his work, and the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 embodied many of his ideas. He tried, without success, to

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[17] Saloma, pp. 109-10. [18] The Earl of Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon, I, p. 110.

[19] Saloma, p. 125.

move the party to accept a pension scheme calling for five shillings a week for all "necessitous and deserving persons" over sixty-five.[20] Chamberlain's argument for the imposition of tariffs was couched in terms of reform. He said it would provide large sums of money which could be used for old-age pensions, public housing, etc. In the Election of 1906 the party adopted a slogan which reflected Chamberlain's view: "Tariff Reform Means Social Reform."[21]

Austen Chamberlain and other leading Tories gave a friendly greeting to Lloyd George's insurance scheme of 1911. Asuten thought that it required "...the good will and assistance of all sections without regard to party...." and that it "...ought not to be made the subject of party strife."[22] The selection of Andrew Bonar Law as Leader of the Conservative Party intervened, however, and the party adopted, under his inspiration, a rigidly reactionary stance on the measure. This was unfortunate. It ushered in the era of "business Conservatism" which did so much to discredit the party. When Asquith asked Bonar Law in the House of Commons whether he would repeal the Insurance Act if and when his party was returned to power Law replied "Certainly," but a number of backbenchers compelled him to change this to "amend."[23]

The popular mind holds the Baldwin-Chamberlain period in Tory history to be black indeed, though more serious and sympathethic students are qualifying this, particularly in the realm of domestic policy. Keith Feiling has described Neville Chamberlain as a "...radical reformer cast in a Conservative frame."[24] Iain Macleod, in his apologetic biography of Chamberlain, has stressed his commitment to social

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20 Saloma, pp. 131-3. 21 Ibid., p. 136. 22 Ibid., p. 331.

23 Ibid., p. 348.

24 Keith Feiling, The Life of Neville Chamberlain (London, 1946), p. 200.

welfare. Chamberlain was particularly interested in housing and health. In 1924 he expressed his preference for the Ministry of Health when he could have had the Exchequer. At the outset he laid twenty-five specific proposals before the Baldwin Cabinet, twenty of which were law before he left the Ministry. Saloma believes that "Chamberlain, in the policies he advocated, represented the finest expression of the synthesis of Tory ideals and individualistic philosophy."[25] His record of achievement in the field of housing was quite distinguished. An average of 350,000 dwellings a year were constructed in the four years prior to the outbreak of the war. After the party's defeat in 1929, it was Neville Chamberlain who established the Research Department as an adjunct to the Central Office.

The last item to be noted in that long chain which binds the old Toryism of the paternalistic squirearchy to the "New Conservatism" of 1945-51 is the Tory Reform Committee which was so active in the years of World War II. "The central notion linking members of the Tory Reform Committee was the rejection of the values and policies of business Conservatism, of doctrinaire laissez-faire."[26] In 1943, after the introduction of the Beveridge Report, the Committee urged the immediate creation of a Ministry of Social Security for the purpose of implementing the recommendations of the Report.[27] In 1944, Viscount Hinchingbrooke wrote a definitive statement of the philosophy of the Committee:

> True Conservative opinion is horrified at the damage done to this country since the last war by 'individualistic' business men, financiers, and speculators ranging freely in a <u>laissez-faire</u> economy and creeping unnoticed into the folds of Conservatism to insult the Party with their votes at elections, to

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[25] Saloma, pp. 361-2. [26] Hoffman, pp. 41-2. [27] Saloma, p. 386.

> cast a slur over responsible Government through influence exerted on Parliament, and to injure the character of our people. It would wish nothing better than that these men should collect their baggage and depart. True conservatism has nothing whatever to do with them and their obnoxious policies.[28]

Hinchingbrooke called the Beveridge Report "...the very essence of Toryism."[29]

Mr. Quintin Hogg was one of the most prominent members of the Tory Reform Committee. His evaluation of the philosophy of the Tory reformer is quite relevant to the theme of this chapter. His words in 1944 quite clearly foreshadow his famous book of 1948, The Case for Conservatism, which made such a contribution to the development of a new view of the Tory Party. In 1944 he wrote,

> He [the Tory Reformer] will not engage in the dispute between Nationalization and Private Enterprise. He sees in the modern extra-political forms of public control a nationalization which has lost its terrors, and in the larger joint stock companies... a private enterprise which has lost its meaning. He is not impressed by the fear of schemes for social security as destructive of enterprise. On the contrary, he sees in them the basis of social stability....He recognises that privilege based on birth and wealth has served its ends, and looks forward to a classical democracy in which differences of education and technical skill have taken their place.[30]

It is a problem, as with liberal Republicans in the U. S. A., to know whether a person who espouses such sentiments can remain a member of an essentially conservative movement. In an article in 1950, Viscount Hinchingbrooke showed a change of mind and heart:

> A return to traditionalism is clearly what the world is now forcing upon us, and with that return the Labour Leaders who stand for arrogant and unnatural conceptions of collective planning will be overthrown....May it be that our real genius is to have no plan? The success of our planning in the war has inspired some people to extol the same arts for peace. This view to some extent inspired the authors of the Conservative Industrial Charter....I consider we are anti-planners at heart....[31]

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[28] Viscount Hinchingbrooke (ed), Full Speed Ahead!: Essays in Tory Reform (London, 1944), p. 21.

[29] Ibid., p. 9. [30] Ibid., pp. 43-4.

[31] Viscount Hinchingbrooke, M. P., The Quarterly Review, (January, 1950)

The Tory Reformers had "...stressed the necessity of accepting state action and private enterprise as complementary."[32] This was the Tory motif of the Butler era.

One of the main tenets of this thesis is that the Conservative Party's reaction to the defeat of 1945 showed a high degree of resiliency and empiricism. Saloma fully supports this view.[33] This is due in large part to the centralized power structure of the Conservative Party had the deference which it gives to the authority of the leadership in policy making. Policy decisions are made by a small leadership group and then passed on to the party as a whole. The followers generally accept this direction from the top without any determined opposition or factionalism. The Tory Party has not had a significant rift in its ranks [redacted] in over a hundred years. It has, in fact, been able to absorb dissidents from other parties.

R. T. McKenzie said, "The most striking feature of the Conservative Party organization is the enormous power which appears to be concentrated in the hands of the Leader."[34] The point is, that once Mr. Churchill decided to endorse the process of policy re-definition--and there was some reluctance apparently--only a handful of his follwers would take a public stand against this view. Sir Waldron Smithers was the only prominent member of the party who fought against the fruits of the Butler era, and he was a figure of the second or third rank.

Had Disraeli been alive in 1945 to witness the Tory humiliation, he would have repeated, no doubt, the advice which he had given the party seventy-five years before: "In a progressive country change is

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[32] Hoffman, p. 42. [33] Saloma, p. 1 of Summary.

[34] R. T. McKenzie, British Political Parties (London, 1955), p. 21.

constant; and the great question is, not whether you should resist change which is inevitable, but whether change should be carried out in deference to...the traditions of the people, or in deference to abstract principles...."[35] All the Tory Party had to do after 1945 was to build on the solid foundations of the past. Progressive notions already developed in the party would now push their way to the forefront--as they had in the past--and Richard A. Butler would take his place on that long list of Tory worthies who have, at intervals, adapted the party's ideology for service in a new age.

The party did not take long in hitting the comeback trail. There was a degree of confusion at the start--a feeling that it should march somewhere and do something--but the leadership did not give the signal. In fact, as late as the Annual Conference of 1946 there was a sense of dissatisfaction in the ranks--a feeling that the leadership was taking too long in making up its mind.

On October 5, 1945, a meeting was held in London under the chairmanship of Ralph Assheton. All defeated candidates of 1945 were invited to it for an inquest on the reasons for the party's defeat. Approximately 200 men and women attended the five hour discussion which was, at times apparently, quite stormy. The debate reached a boiling point on the subject of Lord Beaverbrook's role in the 1945 General Election. A Mr. Whiteside of Wembley South called for his expulsion from the party. Sir Derrick Gunston said, "I believe there is no man more detested throughout the political world than Lord Beaverbrook."[36] The meeting passed a sweeping resolution pointing toward future developments. It called for a reformation of the constitution, organization, and machinery of

[35] Saloma, p. 62. [36] From the Daily Telegraph of October 6, 1945 quoted by Hoffman, p. 64.

the party "...to be undertaken forthwith on democratic lines by a body representative of all shades of opinion favoring the increase of national wealth and prosperity on the basis of personal freedom and individual incentive."[37]

The striking Socialist victories in the municipal elections of November, 1945 preceded the meeting of the Central Council on November 28, 1945. This meeting was a milestone in the party's determination to reconstruct itself. A resolution was passed unanimously urging "...the necessity of improving the existing machinery for presenting the party's point of view and for acquainting itself with current trends of feeling and opinion...."[38] A more radical resolution was moved requesting that the associations "...take immediate steps so that officers, councils, executive committees, and ward and district polling branches <u>are fully representative of a cross-section of the community, including wage earners, with a view to securing such representation in the House of Commons</u>."[39] The Chairman ruled that the voting for and against was so equal that it was impossible to decide whether the resolution had passed or not. Rather than take a paper ballot "in order not to hold up business" the Chair directed that the resolution be circulated to the associations. This was a very ambiguous beginning for a great period of Tory reconstruction, but the will to be reconstructed was clearly present. The party had not, apparently, entirely decided whether it wanted to appear democratic.

One highly important thing did come out of the November 28th meeting of the Central Council. This was the creation of the Advisory Committee on Policy and Political Education under the chairmanship of R. A. Butler.

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[37] Hoffman, p. 64. [38] <u>Ibid</u>. [39] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 65.

The Central Council, in establishing the new committee laid down the following mandate: "A vigorous effort is immediately necessary to associate members of the party throughout every parliamentary constituency...with the formation of ideas as a basis of policy, and with spreading political education."[40] Thus, despite the reluctance of Churchill to consider demands for explicit statements of policy, a body had been established which would be ready, when the decision was made, to produce policy statements on a wide range of subjects. There was, however, apparently some nervousness about the mission of this new committee, because at the meeting of the Central Council on March 27, 1946, it was pointed out that "It was not intended that this Committee should lay down party policy, but it should help to provide the necessary material on which long-term policy could be based."[41]

As a further indication of the party's commitment to regeneration, three organizations were established in December, 1945: the Research Department, the Parliamentary Secretariat, and the Conservative Political Centre. During the war the Research Department (which had been founded in 1929) ceased to function. R. A. Butler was appointed the chairman of the revived Research Department. (He had served in Chamberlain's original department.) Thus, Butler added another hat to his collection--to go along with those he wore as a member of the Shadow Cabinet and as the chairman of the Advisory Committee on Policy. At the same time, the Parliamentary Secretariat was established under the direct control of Churchill to work with the Shadow Cabinet and backbenchers in preparing briefs on issues arising in Parliament. The Library and the

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[40] Hoffman, p. 70. [41] Ibid., pp. 71-2.

Information Office continued a separate existence at the Central Office. All of these departments were not amalgamated until 1948, but one cannot escape the belief that there must have been, prior to 1948, a high degree of co-operation and shared talent between them.[42]

The Conservative Political Centre was founded in December, 1945 on Butler's initiative "...to revive and extend the educational work which between the wars had been undertaken by the Central Education Department...."[43] The C. P. C. was not concerned with duplicating the propaganda functions of the party's Central Office. It sought through its publications, conferences, and study groups to unite the activists within the party. The C. P. C. was the agency through which the ideas germinated in the Research Department would be disseminated. The C. P. C. was a semi-autonomous organization within the party. It recruited its own membership, at an annual subscription of ten shillings.[44] C. J. M. Alport, who was named director, said that the purpose of the C. P. C. was "...to create a system of adult education for the party and to provide it with the equipment needed to wrest the initiative of the battle of ideas from the Socialists."[45]

The C. P. C. outlined its own purposes in this way:

> First, we supply a substantial body of party workers in the constituencies with background facts and ideas. In this way we try to sharpen the effectiveness of our speakers and canvassers....
>
> Second, we provide material for informed discussion with the party, and a regular channel whereby the results of this discussion can be brought to bear in the hammering out of policy. In this way we try to maintain a continuous two-way movement of ideas between the rank and file of the party and its leadership.
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> Third, we publish and give currency to the results of objective research....we seek to retain for our party the initiative in the political battle of ideas.[46]

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[42] Hoffman, p. 72. [43] Ibid. [44] Vicker, p. 96. [45] Hoffman, p. 73. [46] Vicker, p. 96 .

The work of the C. P. C. took many forms. In 1947 it opened its first bookstore--not far from the Houses of Parliament--stocking all the literature emanating from the Conservative Party plus a general line of publications. Soon, there were three more bookstores, in Newcastle, Cardiff, and Leeds. In the hope of encouraging each local association to have a small library of its own, the C. P. C. came out with a plan whereby the associations could buy everything the party published for £5 a year.[47] The "Two-Way Movement of Ideas" was one of the most interesting of all the experiments conducted by the C. P. C. In 1948, the high point of the program, there were, according to party statistics, a total of 638 discussion groups with 7,000 members dealing with the various subjects put to them. The party was preparing its policy statements with an eye on the election which had to come in 1950. This program was in line with the party's announced determination to broaden participation in policy making to include the mass membership.

For the "Two-Way Movement of Ideas" the C. P. C. published small booklets under the general title of "What Do You Think?" treating such subjects as the future of Germany, taxation, coal, local government, Tory principles, etc. The cost for these little study guides was only three pennies. The most important subjects in the "Two-Way Movement" were the Industrial and Agricultural Charters. In their case the C. P. C. published reports summarizing the information gained from the discussion groups. These were titled, for example, "What We Think About the Industrial Charter" and sold for three pennies.

The Industrial Charter discussions were the most lively and well attended, but I was not able to obtain the booklet summarizing the

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47 Vicker, p. 100.

results of of this phase of the "Two-Way Movement." I do have the publication entitled What We Think About the Agricultural Charter. It shows that there were seventy-four study groups containing, in all, 970 people. At the time when the booklet was published only thirty-eight groups had sent in formal reports.[48] This does not appear to be very noteworthy. The idea behind the "Two-Way Movement" was a good one, but the receipt of only thirty-eight reports must have been distinctly disappointing. Hoffman's judgment on this seems correct to me:

> The Conservative Political Centre's Two Way Movement of Ideas enjoyed a very limited role in the actual creation of party policy, but the function which the Movement and the related activities of the C. P. C. performed as agents of political education was useful in establishing a body of well-informed campaign workers.[49]

If it did nothing else, the "Two-Way Movement" created the illusion of activity, purpose, and a general democratization of the Tory Party.

Almost as soon as the results of the 1945 Election became known, there arose a demand for a restatement of Conservative policies and principles.[50] This demand was not immediately answered and there was some restlessness. The statement of Leo Amery in 1945 may be taken as typical of the concern. He wrote, "There can be no permanent revival of Conservatism without a positive alternative policy to the policy of the Socialist Left....Disraeli's principles...contain, by implication, all the elements of Conservative policy, but they call for a clear and comprehensive restatement in the light of present conditions."[51] In March, 1946, the Central Council passed a resolution stating "...that it is greatly to be desired that Conservative principles should be restated as a basis for future policy."[52] The Scottish Unionists, at their

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[48] What We Think About the Agricultural Charter (London, 1949), p. 1.

[49] Hoffman, p. 278. [50] Ibid., p. 135. [51] Ibid., p. 139.

[52] Ibid.

conference the following month passed a stronger resolution. They viewed "...with grave concern the fact that since the general election the Unionist Party have put forward no constructive programme as an alternative to the hard and fast policy of the Socialist Party."[53] The Northern Area Conference of June, 1946, by a vote of 51 to 28, passed a resolution calling on the leadership to undertake "...the early preparation and announcement of a policy programme."[54]

This was the background of the important annual conference held at Blackpool in October, 1964 where the demand for a policy statement boiled up to the surface in the face of the party leaders. The Times reported as the conference opened that "Mr. Peter Thorneycroft and Mr. Hugh Molson, leaders of the Tory Reform Committee, will ask the conference to spurn 'the negative attitude of building an anti-socialist front while neglecting to formulate a constructive alternative to Socialism....'"[55] At the opening of the conference there were cheers when John Hay, a prominent Young Conservative, complained about the fact that the debate on party policy had been placed last on the agenda. According to him, "...the paramount cry throughout the party was 'What is our policy?' What are our aims and objectives?'"[56] Mr. A. F. G. Rippon confessed his impatience with the party's reluctance to state a policy. He said, "We know our principles; we want a policy!"[57] Mr. Quintin Hogg chimed in to say that the leadership of the party had not kept pace with the rank-and-file on the need for a constructive and authoritative statement of policy.[58] W. Robson Brown moved the following resolution: "That this conference is of the opinion that the

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[53] Hoffman, p. 139. [54] Ibid. [55] The Times, October 3, 1946, p. 4. [56] The Times, October 4, 1946, p. 2. [57] The Times, October 5, 1946, p. 2. [58] Ibid.

Conservative Party...should without further delay, prepare and issue a statement, in a concise form...setting forth the policy for which the Conservative Party stands...."[59] At the end of a short debate, this motion was carried by a "large majority."[60] Obviously, the Tory activists were not satisfied with the use made of the fifiteen months since the great defeat. Bertrand de Jouvenel, who was at Blackpool, wrote that he saw "...what amounted to the outlines of revolt, however deferential and courteous in form, among the Conservative militants...."[61]

Churchill, Eden, and Woolton were rather vague in their replies. Their speeches could not have satisfied those delegates who had been calling for a forceful statement of policy. Lord Woolton, attending his first conference, said that he felt the party was on the verge of a great revival and he pointed to a number of things which he was doing toward achieving this; but he spoke only of Tory principles--not about policy. He said, "We have a belief in the abiding spiritual values that have guided this race through all the dangers of the past. Let us hang on to these things...and work with all our might in order that, once again, England may be free."[62] Anthony Eden felt that the defeat of 1945, grievous as it was, might be a blessing in disguise because "...it gives us an opportunity to re-define our faith and our political objectives....We must not live in the past....we must be prepared to adjust our ideas to the developing needs of the nation."[63] Mr. Churchill all but ignored the demands which had been heard at the conference. His speech was a long one, but most of it was devoted to a blistering attack on the Labour Government. Near the end he said, "I do not believe in

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59 The Times, October 5, 1946, p. 2. 60 Ibid.

61 Bertrand de Jouvenel, Problems of Socialist England (London, 1947), p. 34.

62 The Times, October 7, 1946, p. 2. 63 The Times, October 4, 1946, p. 2.

in looking about for some panacea or cure-all on which we should stake our credit and our fortunes trying to sell it like some patent medicine.... It is easy to win applause by talking in an airy way about great new departures in policy....It would certainly be an error...for us to plunge into a programme of promises and bribes...."[64] A leader with less prestige might have had an unfriendly reception from a conference which had passed a resolution calling for a re-statement of policy, but Churchill was wildly cheered.

The point was not lost, however, on elements of the press. The Scotsman said, "Mr. Churchill's remarks did not constitute a sufficient answer to the...conference's demand for specific proposals."[65] The Times felt that it was not convincing to be told that "...the division at the next election will be between those who...sing the "Red Flag" and those who rejoice to sing "Land of Hope and Glory.""[66] The Economist was impressed with the general tone of the meeting:

> The Conservative Party's annual conference...was a good deal more lively than many had anticipated....The rank and file... were actively in search of a policy....The Conference...left some very clear impressions. It is clear that vitality is coming back to the party and that disaster has not shaken its basic unity.[67]

Samuel Beer says there was great confusion following the 1946 conference. "The initiative in resolving this confusion," he writes, "came from the small circle of top leaders. Within this circle there was a sharp clash, for the leaders like their followers were divided....Although the conflict was real, it was kept behind the scenes and the basic decisions were quickly made."[68]

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64 Randolph Churchill (ed), The Sinews of Peace, The Speeches of Winston S. Churchill 1945 and 1946 (Boston, 1949), pp. 212-15.

65 Hoffman, p. 143. 66 The Times, October 7, 1946, p. 5.

67 The Economist, October 12, 1946, pp. 575-6.

68 Samuel Beer, British Politics in the Collectivist Age (New York, 1965), p. 311.

In spite of what Churchill said against a "programme of promises and bribes," he appointed, before the end of 1946, the Committee on Industrial Policy under the chairmanship of R. A. Butler. The members of the committee were Harold Macmillan, Oliver Lyttleton, Oliver Stanley, Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, David Eccles, D. Heathcoat Amory, Sir Peter Bennett, and J. R. H. Hutchison. The committee was served by three secretaries: David Clarke, Reginald Maudling, and Michael Fraser, who were associated with Butler at the Research Department.[69] It was a blue ribbon group with liberal Tories predominating. They met several times in Butler's office at the Research Department. In addition, meetings were held in nine industrial centers to sound out opinion in the nation. Within six months they produced and published The Industrial Charter. This was the first and the most important of the numerous Tory declarations of policy. I cannot see that it deserved the enormous amount of attention it received. The press was, no doubt, surprised to see the Tories paying so much heed to the necessity of policy commitments--especially in the realm of economics.

Ralph Harris says that Churchill was not "instantly enthusiastic" about the content of the Charter in its original form.[70] Hoffman says that there was a flurry of re-writing and a general atmosphere of tension surrounding the activities of the Research Department during the Easter recess in 1947. This suggests "...that the 'old man' had some alterations in mind."[71] Harris tells of the dramatic way in which Butler discovered that Mr. Churchill was willing to sanction the publication of the Industrial Charter:

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69 Beer, p. 314. 70 Harris, p. 104. 71 Hoffman, p. 145.

> ...Mr. Butler was left uncertain what the Leader's verdict would be until one day when Churchill gave a dinner party for his senior colleagues. Up to the last moment no one was sure what decision, if any, their host would announce. Then Butler found himself invited to take the place of honor at the table, on Churchill's right. Even so he was not prepared for the generous terms in which 'the old man' commended his work on party policy....[72]

The document itself seems quite unexciting to me. There were no radically new departures in it and most of it was couched in the language of good intentions and goodwill, rather than the abrasive, definite language which might have been hoped for. According to the Charter, the Tories wanted free enterprise and national planning and controls to live in harmony:

> Our abiding objective is to free industry from unnecessary controls and restrictions. We wish to substitute for the present paralysis...a system of free enterprise, which is on terms with authority, and which reconciles the need for central direction with the encouragement of individual effort.[73]

Conservative planning would mean a partnership between the government, management, and labor. The Charter made it clear that while it opposed further nationalization, it would not adopt a policy of complete de-nationalization: "We have...no other course but to leave some industries nationalised, but we shall radically overhaul their organisation to make them more human, less centralised and more efficient."[74] One of the central themes of the document was the Tory belief that more humanity could be injected into industrial relations. The Charter promised that the party would conduct a vigorous opposition to the nationalization of iron and steel and that it would de-nationalize road transport. The commodity markets would be re-opened.

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72 Harris, p. 107. 73 The Industrial Charter (London, May, 1947), p. 3.
74 Ibid., p. 24.

The Charter regarded the prevailing levels of taxation to be beyond the limit which citizens should be expected to pay in time of peace. To assist in the reduction of taxes, the Tories promised to cut government spending. In this same field the Tories came out for tax allowances on profits ploughed back for re-equipment, and tax remissions on the interest from small savings.[75]

The party would, it was claimed, repeal the recently passed Trade Disputes Act and establish a Monopolies Commission when returned to office. The first would mean the abolition of the closed shop and the restoration of contracting in to the political levy of the unions; and the second would combat "...employers' monopolies and restrictive practices." The Charter was quite definite on this point: "We condemn... any price agreement designed to keep prices above the costs of the most efficient producers, or levies on more efficient firms to keep the least efficient in business...." The Charter recognized that British business and industry were not as competitive as they might be, and pledged that, under a Tory Government, this would be changed. The Monopolies Commission would investigate allegations of restraint of trade and make recommendations to the Government. The actual enforcement powers for the Commission were not to be very great. According to the Charter, "the floodlight of publicity" would likely produce the desired effect. Where it did not, the Commission would recommend an appropriate course of action to Parliament.[76] The proposal to create such a Commission had been included in the 1945 Manifesto.

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[75] The Industrial Charter, pp. 18-19. [76] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

The final section of the document was called The Workers' Charter. It was a statement of general humanitarian principles:

> Our policy is to humanize, not nationalize. Human relations are of first importance in industry. We do not agree with any view of industry which divides those engaged in it into 'sides' with mutually opposed interests. If the sum of human welfare and happiness is to be increased in this country, it will be only through fostering a sense of united purpose among all those engaged in industry whatever their position.
>
> In such a united effort based on common aims there must be a clear recognition of the duties and rights attaching to each person. The employee has rights which place a corresponding duty on the employer...the employer has corresponding rights in that he may expect the employee to do his job to the best of his ability. Rights and duties are inseparable from all human relationships....

The Charter pointed out three general rights which industry owed to its workers: security of employment, incentive to do the job well and to get a bigger one, and status as an individual no matter how large the firm or how mechanized the job. Labor had its responsibilities also. The Charter expressed it in this way:

> ...if new and better forms of security and incentive are provided, we expect to see some of the old methods by which labour sought to protect itself from insecurity fall into disuse. We refer particularly to those restrictive practices which limit the output of the worker to far below what he can and should do....We believe that the worker is entitled to protection against sweating and excessive pressure, but the restrictive practices which we have in mind cannot be justified....[77]

This latter statement was a good one, and it served to bring into relief one of the country's greatest problems, but without legal means to compel the unions and the men to halt such practices what could really be expected? Did the framers of the Industrial Charter expect the mighty union movement of Great Britain to buckle before a statement of good intentions and common sense? Naivete' was a dominant quality of the Charter.

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[77] The Industrial Charter, pp. 29-30.

The Workers' Charter envisioned a number of industrial codes of conduct covering both management and labor in the major sectors of the economy. It did not recommend enforcement of these codes by act of Parliament. "We are certain," said the document, "that the vast majority will gladly conform voluntarily and we expect to enlist the co-operation of trade associations in ensuring that the standards are observed." Any firm which did not follow the dictates of the code for his industry would be, after a warning, deprived of all government contracts.[78]

In summary, we can say that The Industrial Charter pledged the Tory Party to maintain full employment by Keynesian methods; to preserve and even extend the social services; to reduce taxation and increase incentives for re-investment; to combat restrictive practices in labor and management; to preserve some degree of nationalization; and to humanize industrial relationships.

The press reaction was decidely mixed, but the favorable comment far outweighed the unfavorable. The Daily Mail and the Daily Telegraph were enthusiastic in their support, but Beaverbrook's Daily Express condemned it for approving the continuation of controls. A survey of editorials in forty provincial papers showed only three taking a critical line. The Manchester Guardian found it "...as political documents go... fairly honest and courageous," but it called attention to an "...imperfect harmony between the Charter's position on controls and Lord Woolton's invective on the subject."[79]

The Economist, which had so often mocked the Tories for a lack of policy, professed itself genuinely pleased with the Charter:

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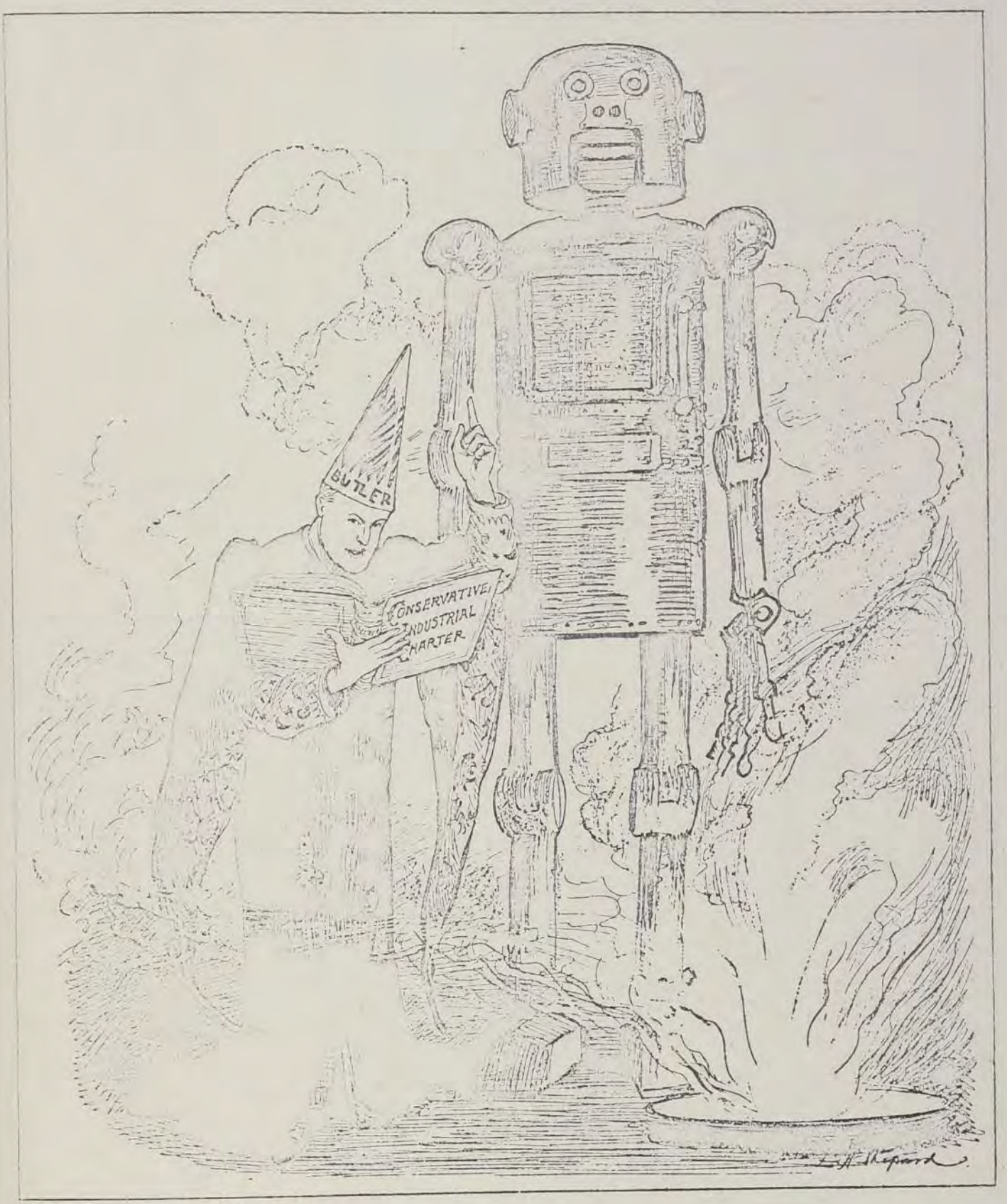
78 The Industrial Charter, p. 32.

79 Hoffman, pp. 152-3.




## THE ROBOT STATE

"We want to make a man of him."

> ...The Industrial Charter is a pleasant surprise--that is to say, it is certainly a surprise and will be pleasant to all except the right wing of the Conservative Party...who will be shocked to discover some of the things to which Mr. Butler and his colleagues propose to commit their party. Like nearly every political manifesto, the document too often retreats into vagueness and generalisation....But when allowance is made for the difficulty that politicians who are seeking votes inevitably feel in expressing themselves very clearly on awkward issues, its is obvious that an honest attempt has been made to face the real issues of economic policy....if it really were to become the policy of the Conservative Party...the face of British politics might well change....But it is here that doubt creeps in. Can Mr. Butler...carry his party with him? Can he persuade it not merely to talk this way in opposition, but to act this way in power....[80]

Even the traditionally hostile New Statesman gave the Charter a good reception, but not without pointing out certain inconsistencies:

> Mr. R. A. Butler and his committee are to be congratulated on the production of the...Industrial Charter. Here is no balm for diehards, no blueprint for crude reaction. The crusted port of Toryism is urbanely decanted into bottles fashioned... for innocuous soft drinks....They go out of their way to emphasize the extent not of their differences, but of their common ground with 'moderate' Socialism.[81]

The Industrial Policy Committee now had the task of selling the Charter to the Conservative Party. It is an indication of the contempt which the leadership has for the wishes of the mass party that they sold the Charter to the nation before having it approved by the annual conference. Harold Macmillan assumed the main burden of defending the document against its right-wing Tory critics. Shortly after it was published he said, "The Socialists are afraid of it; Lord Beaverbrook dislikes it; and the Liberals say it is too liberal to be fair....Was ever a child born under such a lucky star?"[82] In June, 1947 Macmillan said that "The...Charter is merely a restatement in the light of modern conditions of the fundamental and lasting principles of our party."[83]

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[80] The Economist, May 17, 1947, p. 751. (myitalics)

[81] The New Statesman and Nation, May 17, 1947, p. 345.

[82] Hoffman, p. 158. [83] Ibid.

Commenting on the debate within the party over the Charter, The Economist said that "The major matter for comment is not that the Conservatives are bickering over an industrial policy; it is that they should have a policy over which to bicker."[84]

The public interest in the Charter was, apparently, formidable. It was published in a pamphlet form at a price of one shilling. Beer says that over 2,500,000 copies were sold in three months.[85]

The Annual Conference of the Conservative Party was held at Brighton in October, 1947. Sir Waldron Smithers was the most outspoken opponent of the Charter, but he was met with jeers when he tried to speak against it at Brighton. He said, "You must not let the Conservative Party become infected with the Socialist bug. The Conservative Party must stick to its principles or perish....By rejecting this charter you can save the Conservative Party and save England."[86] Sir Waldron was virtually in isolation. There were only three dissenting votes recorded against the acceptance of the Charter.[87] Anthony Eden spoke in favor of adopting the Charter as part of the policy of the Tory Party. He said that support of the document was consistent with the party's history: "We are not a Party of unbridled, brutal capitalism, and never have been....We are not the political children of the laissez faire school. We opposed them decade after decade."[88] In his speech, Mr. Churchill warned against promising Utopia "with the moon thrown in," but he paid tribute to the work of the Industrial Policy Committee: "It must be a great satsifaction to Mr. Butler...that proposals so varied, and in many cases controversial, should have received the overwhelming, indeed unanimous, approval of this, the greatest of all our Conferences we have ever held."[89]

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84 The Economist, June 21, 1947, p. 971. 85 Beer, p. 316.
86 Hoffman, p. 165. 87 Beer, p. 315. 88 Ibid., pp. 315-6.
89 Randolph Churchill (ed.), Europe Unite, The Speeches of Winston S. Churchill, 1947 and 1948 (Boston, 1950), p. 155.

With the Industrial Charter out of the way, the Research Department, whose staff had now grown to almost fifty members, was able to produce policy statements on a broad front. In the following year and a half, policy statements were published under the following titles: The Agricultural Charter, Imperial Policy, and The Conservative Policy for Wales and Monmouthshire. In addition, there were statements of policy for women and for Scotland. Though these documents were not without significance, they hardly warranted, and did not get, the attention which was given to the Industrial Charter.

The Agricultural Charter was published June 25, 1948 without arousing much press comment or excitement.[90] The heart of the Tory statement was the promise to improve the system of guaranteed prices beyond the terms of Labour's Agriculture Act of 1947. It promised to "...give the British farmer real confidence in the future by guaranteeing prices and markets for all the food he can produce...up to our overall target."[91] The Conservatives would also add oats and wool to the schedule of commodities for which guaranteed prices were provided. If returned to office the Tory Party would, so said the Charter, increase the level of agricultural production by 50% compared to 1938-39. They would (perhaps) re-introduce sliding tariffs seasonally adjusted to protect British horticulture. They would increase research and credit facilities for agriculture and reduce the level of bureaucratic control over the farmer. One one question the Tories were quite emphatic: "With any proposal to nationalize the land, Conservatives wholly and deeply disagree."[92]

There was also an Agricultural Workers' Charter which pointed out the need for improved status and incentives to offset the attractions

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90 Hoffman, pp. 173-4. 91 The Agricultural Charter (London, 1948), p. 17.
92 Ibid., p. 2.

of city life. The improvement of housing and living conditions was recognized as a primary need:

> Among our practical proposals for the improvement of the general conditions of rural life are the grouping of new houses in and around existing villages...the provision of piped water and modern drainage as a first charge on the agricultural capital development programme, more buses for easier shopping, more telephones and more convenient arrangements for education and entertainment.[93]

The only person to vote against the acceptance of the Agricultural Charter at the party conference of October, 1948 was R. Statham. His main objection was due to the fact that the Central Office had already sold the Charter to the country before the party had time to consider it.[94]

The Conservative Policy for Wales and Monmouthshire was written almost entirely by Mr. Enoch Powell, one of Butler's young men of promise at the Research Department, and slipped rather unobtrusively on the political scene on St. David's Day, 1949. It was written in Welsh and in English. Its main proposal was the creation of a Cabinet Minister with special responsibility for Wales. The Tories rejected the idea that a separate legislature for Wales would be in the national interest. Hoffman spoke of this document as being "...largely a rag-bag of ideas drawn from the industrial and agricultural charters judiciously mixed with concessions to Welsh national spirit."[95] There was no "Two-Way Movement of Ideas" established to accompany the presentation of the party's Welsh policy. In view of its dubious significance, such a fuss would have been unseemly.

One indication that the party may have been getting tired of the "charter-mania" is found in the reaction of the 1948 conference to the

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[93] The Agricultural Charter, p. 8. [94] Hoffman, p. 178. [95] Ibid., p. 179.

following resolution: "...this conference warmly welcomes the work of the Women's Charter Committee...."[96] Several women spoke against it and the resolution was defeated! Miss Frances Vale, a member of the Young Conservative Central Committee, said that "...the charter habit was psychologically unsound." It had ended up, she thought, as a mere "vote getting stunt." She resented the notion that women's problems should be considered as something apart, and urged that anything relating to women should be integrated into general policy statements.[97] In spite of the fact that the 1948 conference turned down the resolution favoring the work of the Women's Charter Committee, the party went ahead and published it anyway--under the title of A True Balance. It was a singularly unexciting document, being little more than a review of Tory policy on housing, education, recreation, etc. It did pledge, however, to revise any laws which do not "...correspond to the status of women in a modern society;" and conduct "...an enquiry into out-of-date legislation affecting women...."[98] This meant, presumably, any remaining legal disabilities which tended to make women unequal to men.

The last of the policy statments was published on June 24, 1949. It was entitled Imperial Policy. It did not receive the attention that it deserved--coming as it did at the time of the general policy statement for the forthcoming election: The Right Road for Britain. The News Chronicle remarked that "...the roll of Imperial drums was notably absent."[99] In Imperial Policy the Tories showd a clear acceptance of the constitutional development of the Empire, and its evolution toward full self-government:

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[96] Hoffman, p. 180. [97] Ibid. [98] The Right Road for Britain (London, 1949), p. 44.

[99] Hoffman, p. 182.

> The Conservative Party reaffirms that self-government within the British Empire and Commonwealth is an aim to be achieved as soon as Colonial peoples are ready for it.
>
> It is impossible to state...the precise moment at which a country is ready to govern itself, but the Party considers that two conditions should be laid down which should be fulfilled before self-government is achieved:
>
> (1) That the country is economically sound and that the social services have reached a reasonable standard of efficiency.
>
> (2) That power can be transferred to the people as a whole and not to a small and unrepresentative political, racial, or religious oligarchy.[100]

In July, 1949, the Tories announced their general policy statement, which condensed and united the previous, specific statements under the heading of The Right Road for Britain. This was in preparation for the Election of 1950 and will be treated in the next chapter.

One of the most interesting parts of the Tory reconstruction after 1945 was the exposition, by several writers, of basic Conservative principles, with a view to arriving at a philosophy of Conservatism. The most important of these was Quintin Hogg's brilliant The Case for Conservatism, which was published in 1948 and had an enormous sale. Other works in this area are David Clarke's The Conservative Faith in a Modern Age and T. E. Utley's Essays in Conservatism. These publications buttressed and supplemented the re-definition of Conservative policy. They were deliberately pitched on a very high intellectual level, quite beyond anything which the average person would be interested in, or could comprehend. They are written in a sprightly style, but they are clearly not for casual reading nor for mass consumption.

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100 Imperial Policy (London, 1949), p. 55.

The basic tenets of the political philosophy of Conservatism that were expounded in these works are: A belief in religion and the part it has to play as a bulwark of the state; a distrust of the perfectability of man and society, and a belief in the innate sinfulness of man; a distrust of politics as a means to solve the problems of society; a conviction than society can only develop organically; an emphasis on patriotism and nationalism as opposed to internationalism; a belief in the mystique of authority; and support for an hierarchial society. The following quote from Hogg's book will indicate the high quality of the work and its eloquence:

> The function of Conservatism is to protect, apply, and revive what is best in the old. He therefore is the true Conservative who seeks to fit the old humanism, the old Christian tradition of Europe to the world...of the atomic bomb....Upon the success of these endeavours largely depends the question of whether the brave new world will be a paradise or a purgatory for the common man.[101]

Picking up a theme from Burke, Hogg wrote,

> To yield to legitimate pressure for reform is in reality the surest gurantee against revolution....Conservatives also draw the moral that there is an advantage, even from the point of view of those desiring radical change, in preserving the mystique of a traditional authority.[102]

Finally, "...Conservatives believe that a society can only change healthily when it changes naturally--that is, in accordance with its acquired and inherited characteristics, and at a given rate."[103]

Clarke wrote in defense of an hierarchial society: "Conservatives do not deny that the existence of classes is necessary and natural.... Inequality of natural ability necessarily results in class. Some men will always rise superior to others....The Conservative...can believe only that class must be founded upon quality and respect for quality...."[104]

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101 Quintin Hogg, The Case for Conservatism (London, 1948), p. 15.

102 Ibid., p. 25. 103 Ibid.

104 David Clarke, The Conservative Faith in a Modern Age (London, 1947), p. 14.

This short section on the philosophy of the "New Conservatism" can be concluded with another characteristic remark from Hogg's book; in which he unites distrust of politics as being able to provide the panacea for mankind and a belief that society must be based on religious beliefs. He wrote, "...Belsen is the end to which our century of enlightenment has brought us...."[105]

Whether they meant only to beguile the public, or to put before it a truly serious Tory alternative to Socialism which would be implemented once the party returned to power is difficult to say. Many of the things which the party promised or implied in its policy statements between 1945 and 1951 did not come into being. After a shaky start, the Tories put their hearts into the re-definition of policy and the establishment of a particular philosophy to underlie it. Toryism took on an excitement which it had not, in the past, possessed. Young people, particularly, were attracted into the party in increasing numbers. Conservatives could point with pride to the ferment within the party. Looked at in retrospect one can say that the party activities of the period abounded in diversity, but were united by a common theme: a will to power.
In 1954, R. A. Butler spoke with pride of the work which had been accomplished by the Research Department "to prepare the mind of the country and to educate our Party." As a result, he said, "we returned to power in 1951." [106] This may be an oversimplification--and certainly he had no right to claim credit which might belong to Lord Woolton--but considering the narrow margin of victory in 1951, he had perhaps the right, if anyone did.

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105 Hogg, pp. 16-17. 106 Beer, p. 309.

NEWS CHRONICLE 8th March 1949 189


RESTORATION COMEDY

"MARK MY WORDS, GENTLEMEN, WE'RE YEARS AHEAD OF OUR TIME."

196 NEWS CHRONICLE 10th March 1950


"HE THINKS LIKE A TORY, AND TALKS LIKE A RADICAL, AND THAT'S SO IMPORTANT NOWADAYS."

Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Act II.

# CHAPTER V

## THE ELECTION OF 1950

## THE TEST OF THE "NEW CONSERVATISM"

The 1945 General Election caught all three major parties in varying degrees of unpreparedness. By contrast, 1950 gave ample warning of approach and enabled the two major parties to bring their organizations to a pitch of efficiency and readiness which probably had no parallel in the history of British political practice. Every party faced the coming contest with optimism and the number of candidates which ultimately filed, 1,868, was a record total, not likely to be surpassed.

From 1948 on, the press became very election conscious, and by the middle of 1949 responsible journalistic opinion was urging the Prime Minister to call an election as soon as possible on the grounds that the national interest required it. As early as April 11, 1949, the Labour Party published Labour Believes in Britain. This was virtually an election manifesto. On July 23, 1949, before an open air rally of some 40,000 at Wolverhampton, Mr. Churchill delivered the Tory counterpart, The Right Road for Britain. When the deadlock between the Lords and Commons over the passage of the Iron and Steel Act was resolved on November 14, 1949, the Labour Party had virtually completed the legislative program expounded in Let Us Face the Future of of almost five years before. The great mandate for socialism had been

exhausted. Seldom had a political program been so fully implemented.

On January 17, 1950, the Labour Party issued its election manifesto under the title of Let Us Win Through Together. It was another strongly socialist document. It promised another program of nationalization and to maintain full employment. The latter was a subject on which Labour never tired of speaking in the 1950 contest. They contrasted their own record of full employment with the Tory record between the wars and charged that if the Tories were returned so would "the bad old days." "The choice," the Labour Manifesto said, "is between the Labour Party--the party of positive action...and the Conservative Party--the party of outdated ideas, of unemployment, of privilege."[1]

After Mr. Attlee announced the date for the Election of 1950, the Tory leaders went to work to put their election manifesto in final form. For the purposes of this thesis it would be nice to be able to show that the Tory Manifesto, This Is The Road, and the subsequent campaign on the hustings, presented a ringing affirmation of the tenets of liberal Conservatism as they were presented in the last chapter. Unfortunately, it is only possible to do this to a degree. The Manifesto was a liberal document, and this was a point widely recognized, but it was not, perhaps could not be, very different from the statement of 1945. Tory speakers, on the wireless and on the campaign trail, were perhaps more restrained and constructive in 1950. This was certainly true in the case of Mr. Churchill, but here again it was a difference only of degree. Clearly, the Tory Party was more like the Tory Party of 1945 than different from it. This was only to be expected. There had been

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[1] The Times, January 18, 1950, p. 2.

changes, but these were more on the surface, a case of "skimmed milk masquerading as cream." The Tory orators of 1950 were certainly happier expounding on the evils of nationalization and the decline of Britain in the world, rather than on new advances in the Welfare State.

On January 21st Mr. Churchill addressed the nation by radio in an important pre-election speech prior to the formal announcement of Tory policy. There was nothing particularly distinctive about his talk but it seemed to please the critics and to set a good tone for the campaign ahead. There was none of the fear-mongering and exaggerated abuse of his opening salvo in the 1945 contest. If the "New Conservatism" had achieved nothing more than moderating Mr. Churchill's election oratory, it would have done a great deal. He recalled his own record as a champion of reform and he dedicated his party to "...the establishment and maintenance of a basic standard of life and labour below which a man or woman...shall not be allowed to fall." He went on to say that "Once we have made that standard secure we propose to set the nation free as quickly as possible from controls and restrictions which now beset our daily life. Above the basic standard there will be free opportunity to rise." This was a fair statment. The Tories were already aware that Labour intended to make the employment question a major part of their campaign, and Mr. Churchill addressed himself to this issue with great cleverness. The Churchillian exposition of this issue was repeated not only by himself often, but by many other Tory orators in the campaign. It became the standard Tory counterblast. He said:


ATTLEE GET YOUR GUN

> The Conservative and National Liberal Parties regard the prevention of mass unemployment as the most solemn duty of government....On the question of unemployment there is no real difference between the two political parties. Why then in this election should all kinds of wrongful charges and false claims of party achievements be bandied about, when we are all agreed that American aid has prevented the kind of unemployment which appeared after the last war and rose again to such hideous heights under the Socialist Government of twenty years ago, and when we are also agreed on the kind of remedies we should use to cope with it should it occur.[2]

Herbert Morrison and Bevan had said that there would have been mass unemployment in the absence of American and Commonwealth aid. This was taken up by the Tories to counter the Labour arguments that a return to Conservative Government would bring in its wake widespread unemployment and deflation. The Tories could also demonstrate that unemployment had been higher in 1929-31 under a Labour Government than subsequently in the 'thirties. Therefore, in answer to Labour's charge that they had caused the unemployment, the Tories could advance the notion that, on the contrary, they had brought it down.

On January 23, 1950, at a party rally in London, Mr. R. A. Butler presented the Conservative Manifesto, This Is The Road. The overlap between it and its Labour rival was quickly pointed out by the press, but this was probably overdone in view of Labour's new program of nationalization. The Manchester Guardian had called The Right Road for Britain, of the previous summer, "Tory Socialism" but this appears excessive.

According to the Tories

> ...the Socialists have failed in their duty. National resources have been squandered. Individual effort has been discouraged or suppressed. National unity has been deeply injured. The Government have shrunk from the realities of the situation and have not told the people the truth....During these bleak years Britain

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[2] Randolph Churchill (ed.), In the Balance, Speeches 1949 and 1950 of Winston S. Churchill (Boston, 1952), pp. 157-60.

> has lurched from crisis to crisis and from makeshift to makeshift....With the same labour force as before the war little more than half as many houses are being built....Socialism has imposed a crushing burden of taxation....Enterprise and extra savings have been discouraged....A complete change in the spirit of administration is needed....[3]

There was no equivocation on the subjects of nationalization and controls: "We shall bring Nationalisation to a full stop here and new. Thereby we shall save all those industries...which are now under threat by the Socialists."[4] They would, of course, de-nationalize road transport and save steel from the Government's control. The nationalization of omnibuses and tramways would be halted, and wherever possible those companies already taken over would be offered back to their former owners. They wished to introduce a large measure of free enterprise to civil aviation. Coal and railways would remain under State control, but their administration would be decentralized. The Tories held themselves free to decide the future of the Gas and Electricity Boards until they had more experience in their operation. Through their proposed Monopolies Commission, the Tories would protect the consumer against the power of the publically owned firms.

In the same spirit of setting the nation free, the Conservatives said, "The time has come when controls must be reduced to the minimum necessary as the supply situation improves....As soon as we have been able to ensure that the prime necessities of life are within the reach of every family...we shall abolish the existing rationing system."[5] Taxation would be reduced through the savings in Government which a Tory administration would make. Food subsidies would be reduced but

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[3] This Is The Road (London, 1950), pp. 3-5.

[4] Ibid., p. 10. [5] Ibid., p. 11.

"There will be no reduction which might influence the price of food without compensating increases to those most affected. These compensations will take the form...of larger family allowances, pensions, and other social benefits...."[6] This was only one example of a fundamental inconsistency in the document. The Tory claim that they would reduce government spending and taxation was mocked by their insistence that under their leadership the insititutions of the Welfare State would be improved: "We pledge ourselves to maintain and improve the Health Service."[7] The most original Tory proposal in the sphere of social security was their pledge to provide an optional pension of ten shillings a week to those people who elected to stay at their jobs.

Other proposals of note included a promise to reach a reform and final settlement of the constitutional powers of the House of Lords, and to restore the University seats in the House of Commons which had been taken away by the act of 1948. The disappearance of these seats, which they mainly had, seemed to upset the Tories greatly, but during their years in power they did not restore them. Reform of the House of Lords waited ten years for enactment.

The Conservatives were clearly happier when declaiming on the virtues of free enterprise. At the end of their Manifesto they stated, in a succinct paragraph, "Our Purpose"

> We intend to free the productive energies of the nation from the trammels of overbearing state control and bureaucratic management. To denationalise wherever practicable, to decentralise as much as possible, to encourage and reward personal responsibility, to give enterprise and adventure their heads: these are the principles on which a Conservative Government will act.[8]

The social services, in the end, got short shrift.

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[6] This Is The Road, p. 20. [7] Ibid., p. 17. [8] Ibid., p. 22.

The Times generally approved the Conservative Manifesto, but felt that it had been too vague and perhaps dishonest in its promise to combine a reduction in taxes and expenditure while maintaining and improving the social services.[9] The Economist mocked it: "There is something in the Conservative programme to please almost everybody.... If the Conservatives are really set on outbidding their opponents for leadership of the welfare state, they have certainly made a thorough job of it."[10]

The greater part of the Tory effort was decidedly anti-socialist in nature. I searched very hard to find a beautifully articulated statement of the "New Conservatism," but in vain. Tory orators almost invariably invoked the free enterprise vs. socialism theme. Mr. Brendan Bracken, speaking at Lincoln said, "A Conservative Government will end nationalization without any delay. We will cut its throat from ear to ear and then do our best to humanize and decentralize the industries which have been paralysed by nationalization."[11] In a radio address on February 6th, Mr. Eden devoted most of his speech to economic themes, demanding the "unleashing" of free enterprise and a reduction in the burden which the Government imposed on industry and the individual.[12] At Leamington, on February 7th, Mr. Eden expressed the belief that unless the Government moved to stimulate enterprise, disaster would face the nation on the cessation of Marshall aid: "The stern fact is that Marshall aid is coming to an end in 1952, and that it is Marshall aid which has made our full employment possible and enabled us to obtain food and raw materials for our people."[13] L. S. Amery

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[9] The Times, January 25, 1950, p. 7. [10] The Economist, January 28, 1950, p. 185.

[11] The Times, February 6, 1950, p. 3. [12] The Times, February 7, 1950, p. 4.

[13] The Times, February 8, 1950, p. 4.

warned that the extension of nationalization would mean dearer and less efficient production which would ultimately restrict seriously British sales abroad. The result would be, of course, mass unemployment. He said that the essence of Conservative policy was to encourage free competition while guarding against abuses.[14] Speaking at Wolverhampton on February 20th, Mr. Eden said, "We are determined to reduce Government expenditure. We will use the reductions to increase incentives and assist industry....We shall bring nationalization to a full stop...."[15] At Grantham on the same day, Lord Woolton told his audience "I give you this pledge on behalf of the Conservative Party: We will bring down the cost of living; we will bring down taxation; we will free you from a great deal of unnecessary and very expensive controls."[16] Lord Woolton made the high cost of living his theme in the campaign. Sir David Maxwell Fyfe echoed the same sentiments: "...a most important plank in the Conservative platform is the reduction of Government expenditure....We must reduce taxation to give our people incentives...."[17]

The Times spoke of "...full employment, the crux of the election argument...."[18] This certainly appeared to be the case. The Labour Party had, apparently, decided not to make their effort to achieve social justice the theme of the campaign. The Socialists forgot about their program for 1950 and their achievements in the past in order to be able to point out to the voters the great unemployment which existed in the country between the wars, The Times noted the incongruity of this:

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14 The Times, February 7, 1950, p. 4. 15 The Times, February 21, 1950, p. 2.
16 Ibid. 17 The Times, February 15, 1950, p.4.
18 The Times, February 7, 1950, p. 7.

> The election is being fought...as if 1950 were 1940...or even 1935. Outside the ranks of Labour loyalists, the incessant cry of 'the bad old days'...may have little magic...it may well seem nonsensical, as well as undemocratic, to suggest that the Conservatives must never govern again because there was unemployment and depression between the wars. It might have been much wiser...for the Labour leaders to stand simply on their record since 1945....[19]

"The Labour Party in its broadcasts, as in the rest of its propaganda, put the employment appeal first."[20] The radio address of Mr. James Griffiths on February 8th may be taken as an example of Labour's use of the issue:

> Haven't you at one time or another heard a Conservative minded person saying that a dose of unemployment would ginger the workers up....That's the true voice of Conservatism....No Government...has the right to use one poor workless man to frighten his ten mates....Would you like to be the eleventh man?[21]

Conservative speakers replied endless tothese taunts, and always in the same terms: without American and Commonwealth aid the British economy would have virtually collapsed putting millions out of work, as the Labour leaders themselves had admitted, and that the greatest unemployment between the wars had taken place under the second Socialist Government. An extremely well-done poster was prepared by the Central Office to embrace this argument and it was circulated in the millions. A pamphlet devoted to the same theme, expressed in much the same way, was widely disseminated. The poster told the whole story beautifully. There was a graph showing the fluctuations in unemployment since 1920. It showed that when the Socialists had assumed office in June, 1929 unemployment stood at approximately one million--two years later, when the National Government with a Conservative majority took over, it stood at 2,600,000. The graph then shows a downward curve reaching under

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19 The Times, February 14, 1950, p. 7.

20 H. G. Nicholas (ed.), The British General Election of 1950 (London, 1951), p. 129.

21 The Times, February 9, 1950, p. 2.

a million at the outbreak of the war. The caption was "This chart shows how Unemployment has always RISEN sharply under Socialist Governments--and has DROPPED under Governments with a Conservative majority." Quoted below the graph were statements by Sir Stafford Cripps, Mr. G.R. Strauss, and Mr. Aneurin Beven, all to the effect that full employment was dependent on overseas' aid.[22] This poster embodied the whole Tory counter-attack, which, one can guess, rather effectively neutralized Labour on this issue--at least so far as uncommitted voters were concerned. The Socialists can be charged with stunt electioneering in their strident effort to make this rather unreal issue their main attack in 1950.

Mr. Churchill was less active and more demure in the election of 1950, than he had been five years before, but he still launched his old blistering scorn on the Labour Government occasionally. In his adoption speech at Woodford he made it clear what he thought the contest was all about:

> I have no hesitation is saying that the new Socialist manifesto contains...an effective design or plot--for that is the truer term--to obtain power over their fellow countrymen such as no British Government has ever sought before, and that would be fatal alike to their freedom and prosperity....So far we are only at the first stage in this evil journey. But already enterprise, daring and initiative are crippled. Property is destroyed by the heaviest taxation in the world....Grapple with your duties and your perils while you still have your ancient strength.[23]

The promise in the Labour Manifesto to mutualize assurance was taken by the Tories to mean a threat to the whole insurance industry. Mr. Churchill particularly liked to make an issue out of this, and he even resorted to scare tactics. At Leeds he revived this theme in a way which was reminiscent of the famous "Postal Savings Scare" of 1931:

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22 The poster is reproduced in Nicholas, opposite p. 214.

23 Churchill, In The Balance, pp. 167-9.

> The insurance raid is not only a question of votes. It is a chance of getting more power. Upwards of £1,300,000,000 are held by industrial assurance and friendly societies, gathered by the thrift and forethought of a generation for the widows, the orphans, the old and the infirm. The Socialist object is to get hold of the investments in stocks and shares a rig the market with them so as to dominate the fortunes of what is left of free industry. This is a part of the plan by which Mr. Attlee and his minority of convinced Socialists hope to become effective masters of the whole field of our national life.[24]

In the next week, Mr. Attlee set off on his famous thousand mile tour in the family car--pre-war and far from deluxe--with Mrs. Attlee driving him. When they got ahead of schedule, they would pull over to the side. The Prime Minister would light his pipe and go to work on a cross-word puzzle while Mrs. Attlee knitted. This was probably the most effective antidote possible to Mr. Churchill's alarums. Could anyone really see Attlee as a robber of widows and orphans, or as an enslaver of the nation?

The Liberal Party hoped to make the Election of 1950 a vehicle for the re-vitalization of their embattled organization. A Gallup Poll had shown that 38% of the British electorate would vote Liberal if they seriously thought it was possible to have a Liberal Government. The obvious answer was, if 38% do so then we will have a Liberal Government, so let us put up the candidates which can make this a reality. Before the day for nominations closed, the Liberal Party had candidates for 475 of the 625 constituencies. This was an experiment and a gamble which had a touch of desperation about it, because the total Liberal membership in the 1945 Parliament was only twelve, and several of these came from the now abolished University seats. The Tories, quite naturally, watched uneasily as more and more Liberal candidates were

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[24] Churchill, In The Balance, p. 174.

announced. This produced a plethora of three-cornered fights in constituencies which the Tories hoped to win, but where the presence of a Liberal contender would put the issue in doubt. It was widely thought that in the absence of a Liberal candidate, Liberal-minded people would prefer to vote Tory. Mr. Churchill was infuriated by this third party presumption and throughout the campaign he made the Liberal leaders the particular objects of his scorn. At Woodford on January 28th he castigated the ambitious plans of "...the small group of Left-wing Liberals gathered in London" who hoped that "...by splitting the vote they may frustrate the will of the majority of the nation and so show how important they are." He felt "...sure that British Liberalism will recoil from and rise superior to such sorry and wanton machinations."[25] In almost every speech he made, Mr. Churchill made an appeal to Liberal voters not to waste their votes on hopeless and essentially frivolous candidates. This, he argued, would only ensure the return of the Labour Government. He stressed the broad overlay between the principles of the Liberal Party and modern Conservatism.

Mr. Churchill's final broadcast on February 17th, which drew over half the electorate to their sets, ended on a moving note, to which few could fail to respond. I have heard these words spoken on a recording many times and I can say that there emotional impact is powerful. They are all the more poignant when one reflects how much he must have wanted to win the election, for if he lost, he might not live to carry the Tory standard into battle again, and in spite of all his laurels, it could be said of him that he could not win a vote of confidence in time of peace from the British people. He closed his speech with these words:

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25 Churchill, In The Balance, p. 169.

> ...I am--as I am reminded--an old man....all the day-dreams of my youth have been accomplished. I have no personal advantage to gain by undertaking once more the grim and hard duty of leading Britain and her Empire through and out of her new and formidable crisis. But while God gives me the strength and the people show me their good will, it is my duty to try and try I will....We are not going to promise smooth and easy times....We will do our best for all, and build on a sure foundation the structure of British greatness and world peace.[26]

His eve-of-poll message was, however, cast in a far different mould: "Although this election has been among the most orderly I have ever seen it has been one in which more falsehoods have been spread by the Socialist Party....I look forward to Thursday when, with a gesture of intense wrath, indignation and contempt, the British nation will spit all this Socialist trash and jargon out of their mouths forever."[27]

Thus ended the most costly and best engineered Tory effort in the history of the party. On election day, The Times gave the Conservatives an encouraging pat: "The election will be remembered as the first one in which the Conservatives had both a better programme and a better party machine than their Labour opponents....The Conservatives, the challengers, have had the better of the great debate."[28]

The vote counting itself had all the drama of a close horse race. At 4:46 p.m. on February 24th, the Conservative and Liberal total seats won equaled exactly the number won by Labour, with ninety-three seats yet to be decided. At 8:30 p.m. Labour secured its 313th win--thus assuring that it would be able to organize the House. Late returns brought them two more wins. Though the election was no triumph for Labour, this much was clear, the highly touted Tory attack had been

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26 Churchill, In The Balance, p. 214.

27 The Times, February 22, 1950, p. 4.

28 The Times, February 23, 1950, p. 7.

turned back. Looked at another way, of course, a gain of eight seats from a party in power in a time of peace and full employment was an impressive performance. The final results were:

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|---|---|---|---|
| Labour..... | 13,295,736 | -- 315 seats | --a loss of 78. |
| Conservative and allies..... | 12,501,983 | -- 298 seats | --a gain of 85. |
| Liberal..... | 2,621,489 | -- 9 seats | --a loss of 3. |
| Others..... | 158,454 | -- 3 seats | |
| | 28,769,477 (84% of electorate voting)[29] | | |

The Liberal Party was stunned by the Election of 1950. They lost 319 deposits out of 475. This item alone cost them £22,850. In addition, they spent £217,291 on election expenses. I have made a very careful study of the election results in all 625 constituencies, and I concluded that there were at least seventeen instances where the presence of an essentially frivolous Liberal candidate probably caused the Tory to lose.

It is difficult to know why Labour won, with so much seemingly against them. They articulated a new and tough program of socialism in their Manifesto but they then backed away from, preferring instead to concentrate all their fire on unemployment between the wars.

It was almost inevitable that the Conservatives would make the high cost of living, anti-socialism, and the Labour record the main themes of their campaign; but it is, nonetheless, surprising to find the degree to which they ignored their policy statements of the late 'forties. The "New Conservatism" was hardly a factor in the actual contest itself. The charters were seldom mentioned, and some of them did not even rank a footnote in the Tory Manifesto. The Industrial Charter, which had been so prominent in 1947, was conspicuous by its neglect in 1950! While the Tory campaign of 1950 did not stress the

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[29] Nicholas, p. 306.

party's commitment to further the Welfare State, it did not contradict it.

The work of Lord Woolton at the Central Office was, of course, another matter. By all accounts the Conservative Party was better organized than ever before in its history. Where the vote was close, and there are many close contests in British elections, good organization could make the difference between victory and defeat. The Tories made a good effort to gather in the postal vote, which was now larger than ever as a result of new provisions in the 1948 Act. Nicholas wrote "It is not very hard to believe that the Conservatives owe at least ten seats to the introduction of the postal vote." He found that the postal vote, over the whole country, was about two-to-one in the Tory favor.[30]

The "swing of the pendulum" accounts, no doubt, for many of the seats which the Tories won. The Labour Party had gained suburban and rural constituencies in 1945 which they could not hope to hold indefinitely. The Tory comeback bid, frustrated in part by the Liberals, was only a qualified success, and in the light of the hard times, this is surprising. Perhaps the average Briton really felt that Labour had done the best they could in difficult circumstances, and that given a little more time, they would straighten things out. Times had not been easy, but for manythey were perhaps better than before the war. There was scarcity, but at least under a Labour Government there had been fair shares for all. The homely charms of Mr. Attlee were not dismissed summarily in the cottage homes of Britain.

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[30] Nicholas, pp. 8-9.

The Election of 1950 caught the nation mid-passage between a dislike of Labour's policy, or, perhaps, simiply of conditions in Britain since the war, and a faltering inclination to trust the Tories once again. The question of trust appears to be the critical factor--the Conservatives were simply not trusted to maintain full employment and fair shares.

When the new Parliament convened Mr. Churchill was in a happier modd than five years before when they had sung the "Red Flag" to him. He said, "I must frankly confess, as I look around, that I like the appearence of these benches better than what we had to look at during the last four and-a-half years. It is certainly refreshing to feel... that this is a Parliament where half the nation will not be able to ride roughshod over the other half....if it be not presumptious for me to say so, we are equals."[31]

He cannot have much liked such equality, however; because the Tories were still a hundred seats from the number they held when he was named Leader of the Conservative Party. Was the judgment still "...Lord Baldwin would have done better?"

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[31] Churchill, In The Balance, pp. 215-6.

# CHAPTER VI

## 1951: THE VICTORY FINALLY COMES

On the afternoon of February 24, 1950 it was apparent that the British electorate had given its most indecisive verdict since 1929. The Times was not alone in believing that a new election would be inevitable within a few months, but Mr. Attlee made it clear that he intended to refrain from this as long as possible. The lack of a sufficient majority made it necessary to consider all major bills in Committee of the Whole House because it was impossible to assure a majority on all committees. The Labour Government showed, nevertheless, that it was within their power to retain control of affairs, though they could never be at their ease. Even though three line Whips were common practice the Government was defeated on minor matters seven times during the life of the 1950 Parliament; but on all issues of importance it survived, albeit by a mere taxi load of members. Whether because of their small majority, or through internal disagreements, the Labour Party abandoned many of the socialistic proposals contained in their Manifesto of 1950.

In spite of the ominous predictions surrounding its birth the Parliament of 1950 went on for twenty months, some of them among the most difficult faced by any British Government in peace-time. Throughout 1950 there had been a steady

"THERE'S NOTHING IN IT."

improvement in the balance of payments and in December the picture was thought so good as to enable the suspension of Marshall aid almost two years before the allotted time. The year 1951 presented a different picture; the nation was faced with a severe economic crisis, the gravity of which has been well told in Joan Mitchell's Crisis in Britain 1951. A 10% rise in the cost of living during 1951 was the most outward manifestation of this to the average Briton, but the increase in prices of raw materials due to world stockpiling, the impact of the enlarged defense program on the export drive, and the strong inflationary pressures gave promise of a steadily worsening economic situation. Moreover, the austerity to which Englishmen had become accustomed continued virtually unabated, with many commodities still scarce six years after the end of the war. This was in strange contrast to the burgeoning German economy, and many people asked, only half facetiously, who it was who won the war? Many of these difficulties were brought on by the Korean War and the Labour Government's gallant attempt to make Britain play her full part in the United Nations' effort. Their rearmament program was in excess of Britain's ability to bear and caused dissension within the party.

Furthermore, the Labour Government had been greatly weakened by illness, exhaustion, and disagreement within its high command. The resignation of Sir Stafford Cripps from the Exchequer in October, 1950; the departure of Ernest Bevin from the Foreign Office in February, 1951, shortly before his

death; and the heated disagreement over the budget and rearmament which caused Mr. Bevan, Mr. Harold Wilson, and others to resign their offices and publically express their disapproval of certain Government policies were all factors in the unhappy condition of the Labour Party in 1950-51. It became increasingly apparent that six years in office had simply worn the Labour Party out.

The year 1951 saw a steadily worsening situation in the Middle East where British interests were at stake. A theatrical and highly emotional nationalist, Dr. Mossadeq, had gained political ascendency in Iran and he soon arranged a confrontation with Great Britain over the question of British oil holdings in his country, mainly over the questions of Iran's share of the wealth produced and the employment of Persians in the management and engineering branches of Anglo-Iranian Oil, Ltd. Between April and October the crisis continued to mount. Britain could likely have had a compromise settlement which would not have involved too great a sacrifice, but the denouement finally revealed a truly astounding outcome: the nationalization of Anglo-Iranian Oil and the expulsion of British personnel. Coming just before the election this was truly a godsend for the Tories as it cast grave doubts on Labour's ability to handle intelligently the foreign affairs of the nation. The Conservatives certainly had a legitimate issue for exploitation. The loss of revenue and oil supplies was also quite serious considering the precarious condition of the country in 1951. The Times

thought "British handling of the crisis continues to be almost inconceivably maladroit."[1] "Are we so weak that even the Persians can kick us around?" was a question which many no doubt asked themselves. The difficulties of handling small states in an age of nationalism were not sufficiently understood in 1951.

On September 19, 1951 Mr. Attlee announced his decision to call an election for October 25th. It is difficult to understand why he precipitated a contest at a time when the nation and the Labour Party itself faced such grave difficulties. It was perhaps simply a question of believing that things would get worse before they got better, and that there was nothing to be gained by postponing an appeal to the people. D. N. Pritt, a former left-wing Labour M. P., wrote in his book that "The Labour leaders may well have been willing to lose the election in the face of the many problems that would confront the next government."[2] If Attlee really hoped to win the election and thought he might get the breaks which would allow this he must have been very chagrined by the news which followed, though he certainly must have had some idea of what was developing on the foreign and domestic scenes which might upset his calculations. On September 25th Dr. Mossadeq ordered the remaining British personnel from Abadan, and in late September The Times ran a large financial supplement setting forth in specific terms the grave economic

(1) The Times, October 3, 1951, p. 5.

(2) D. N. Pritt, The Labour Government 1945-51 (New York, 1964), p. 452.

problems facing the nation. On October 3rd it was announced that the gold and dollar resources of the sterling area fell by $598,000,000.00 in the third quarter of 1951.(3)

Mr. Attlee got no respite from his own party conference which convened at Scarborough the first of October. He was faced with something approaching a rebellion in the party ranks led by Mr. Bevan. The most significant development was the triumph of the "Bevanite" point of view in the election of the seven constituency party members of the National Executive. Four of the seven were avowed followers of Bevan, who was himself the top of the poll, followed by Barbara Castle and Tom Driberg, both of whom having more votes than the regulars, James Griffiths and Herbert Morrison. Dalton was only just elected, getting fewer votes than the fourth Bevanite, Ian Mikardo. Shinwell was defeated. Bevan received 250,000 more votes than the ever-popular Griffiths, who was the top Attlee man in the poll.(4) Throughout the election the Tory speakers used this split in the Labour Party and the supposed radicalism of Bevan as a campaign issue.

The Labour Manifesto, Our First Duty--Peace, was issued at Scarborough, and the most remarkable feature was the demotion of nationalization in the Labour firmament. The strong language of the 1950 Manifesto on this subject was dropped. They would, of course, continue with the nationalization of iron and steel, and they would keep a watch on industries which were uncompetitive, monopolistic, and irresponsible

(3) The Times, October 4, 1951, p. 6.
(4) The Times, October 3, 1951, p. 4. Also, see Pritt, p. 453 for discussion of this.

with an eye to taking them over if all other palliatives failed. There were, however, other parts of the document which were more frankly socialistic: "Much more needs to be done in the redistribution of income and property to ensure that those who create the nation's wealth receive their just reward....We shall limit dividends by law, increase taxation on the small minority who own great fortunes and large unearned incomes, and take measures to prevent large capital gains...." The title of the Manifesto indicated that in the midst of the Korean War the Labour Party claimed a unique ability to keep the nation out of further conflict. The reverse side to this was the charge, often made in the campaign, that the Tories, and especially Mr. Churchill, could not be trusted to keep the peace. Labour was very clever in trying to turn the Persian issue against the Conservatives. The Tories had a legitimate issue in condemning the Government for following a confused and disastrous policy; but Labour tried to mute this by saying "Well, if the Tories had been in there would have been war with Iran, and this is what will happen every time the country becomes involved in a squabble with a former client state." This is ironic in view of the fact that Mr. Herbert Morrison, the Foreign Secretary, wanted to use force if necessary against the Persians. He was, however, overruled by Mr. Attlee and the military men, who said that Britain could not mount a swift attack.(5) In their Manifesto, Labour stated the kernel of their warmonger charge

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(5) Pritt has an excellent discussion of the Iranian question on pp. 408-411. The positions of Mr. Morrison and Mr. Attlee were made clear in their own memoirs.

against the Conservatives: "The Tory still thinks in terms of Victorian imperialism and colonial exploitation. His reaction in a crisis is to threaten force....The Tories...would take us backward into poverty and insecurity at home and grave perils abroad."(6) The Times was discomfited by the polemical tone of the Labour Manifesto, particularly the warmonger charge, which it specifically called upon Mr. Attlee to repudiate. The Times felt "It is...a sign of weakness that Labour spokesmen are resorting to such tactics." The editor was likewise appalled by the vagueness of the document and its lack of specific proposals: "...the Labour Government, it appears, are seeking a renewal of their mandate so that they may set up new auction markets in provincial towns."(7) Mr. Attlee, however, apparently had grander objects inmmind as he ended his conference speech with a quote from William Blake saying that he would not be content

> "'Till we have built Jerusalem
> In England's green and pleasant land.'"(8)

To complete the happy picture, Mr. Bevan, in his speech, proclaimed his commitment to party unity for victory at the polls.

The Labour Party tried to use the peace issue in 1951 as they had used the employment issue in 1950. In doing so they turned their backs on their own record and on socialism, and ran the campaign on polemics rather than specifics. The charges of sharp practice and "stunting" are inevitable

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(6) The Times, October 2, 1951, p. 2.
(7) Ibid., p. 5.
(8) Ibid., p. 4.

and probably justified. The number of Labour speakers who insinuated that the Conservatives would have gone to war with Iran was so large that one gains the impression that the party really did not want to talk of anything else. When Egypt announced its intention to denounce the 1936 treaty with Great Britain, the Labour speakers broadened their attack to include the charge that if the Conservatives were returned to power the country might well go to war with that country. Throughout the election, relations between Britain and Egypt worsened almost to the point of a complete rupture, thus providing a sombre and dangerous backdrop to the domestic political battle.

The Conservative Manifesto, Britain Strong and Free, was issued on September 28th. It contained only two important proposals not included in This Is The Road of the 1950 contest, a pledge to build 300,000 houses a year and an excess profits tax. The document began in that understated tone which was to be so typical of the Tory effort, an indication of the realization of the serious problems facing the nation which admitted to no easy solution:

> The Conservative Party...have had no responsiblity for the events which have led us to where we are now, offers no bribes to the electors. We will do our best...but we do not blind ourselves to the difficulties that have to be overcome, or the time that will be required to bring us back to our rightful position inthe world....(9)

Whereas in 1950 they had spoken of reducing taxes, the Tories now only said that it was necessary to "revise" the exiting system of taxation with relief given in cases where profits

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(9) The Times, September 29, 1951, p. 4.

were ploughed back and used for the renewal of plant and equipment. They appeared to feel a little more strongly on the subject of controls than in 1950: "We believe in the necessity for reducing to the minimum possible all restrictive practices on both sides of industry...." Inserted immediately after this statement was the old but good idea of a"...greatly strengthened Monopolies Commission to seek and enable Parliament to correct any operations in restraint of trade, including, of course...the nationalized industries." (10) The Conservative position on nationalization was identical to 1950: de-nationalize iron and steel and road transport, and de-centralize the remaining state owned enterprises. They would also maintain the system of guaranteed agricultural prices and markets and protect horticulture from foreign dumping.

The Tories pledged themselves to support the vast rearmament program on which the Labour Government had embarked, but they felt that better value could be got for the money spent. This planned expenditure of £4,700,000,000.00 in three years called for, so the Tories thought, an excess profits tax which would operate for the duration of the "exceptional period." When they won office the Conservatives found it necessary to do what Mr. Bevan had said was proper, cut back on rearmament spending. This was, I believe, implied by them in the campaign of 1951.

The one daring gambit of the Tory Manifesto came in the

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(10) Ibid.

field of housing; but this was not really fresh news because the Party Conference of the year before had adopted the policy promising the construction of 300,000 houses a year if the Conservatives won office in the next election. The Labour Party promised only 200,000 a year, or better if they could, and they attacked the Tories for raising false hopes; or, at least, of raising hopes which could only be satisfied at the expense of something else. The Socialists were quite vulnerable on the housing question as they had promised 400,000 a year in the 1945 Election and had not been able to achieve even half of this figure. The Conservatives contrasted this with the construction of an average of 350,000 houses a year in the years 1934-39. The 1951 Manifesto took a somewhat more favorable view of changes in rent controls, promising to review the laws, whereas in 1950 the Conservatives had stated categorically their opposition to any tampering with these controls. As in 1950 the Tories charged that the country was not getting proper value for the money spent in the fields of health and education, and that if they gained office they would improve the social services. Having given Labour an issue in 1950 with their vague threats to the food subsidies the Conservatives contented themselves with the promise to "reduce eventually" the food subsidies program and cut out the families which did not require help.

Surprisingly, the document did not make much out of the issues of foreign policy nor the high cost of living, but Socialist extravagance received a thorough [redacted] drubbing:

> Our finances have been brought into grave disorder. No British Government in peacetime has...spent the money in the vast extent and reckless manner of our present rulers....Devaluation was the offspring of wild, profuse expenditure and the evils which we suffer to-day are the inevitable progeny of that wanton way of living. A Conservative Government will cut out all unnecessary expenditure, simplify the administrative machine, and prune waste and extravagance in every department. (11)

The Conservative Manifesto of 1951 contained little that was new and interesting, but in the atmosphere of the campaign of that year this was not a particular liability because the country was inevitably pre-occupied by foreign affairs and the electoral tactics of both parties reflected this. The Tories did not even make a great deal of their housing pledge. Real and apparent Labour blunders in the foreign sphere gave the Conservatives a natural issue. They had always claimed an inherent superiority in those matters and with the glamour and prestige of Mr. Eden on their side they were ideally situated to exploit the nation's concern in this sphere. Naturally, Labour had to devote most of its energies to taking the edge off the Tory attack, and this made the Election of 1951 a substantially different contest from the one of twenty months before. Then the emphasis had been on domestic considerations. Then it had been who could maintain full employment and social justice; now it was who could protect the nation's vital foreign interests without unnecessary or foolish risks of war.

Another major difference from 1950 was the relative inactivity of Mr. Churchill, who, according to D. E. Butler,

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(11) The Times, September 29, 1951, p. 4.

"...spoke less than any other leading figure in the campaign."(12) In 1951 Churchill gave only one radio speech, the first allotted to the Tories, leaving Mr. Eden to give the traditionally more important closing speech. The Deuputy Leader gave the one telecast allotted to the Conservatives and the commentators thought he made an excellent job of it. The first political telecast in British history was given by Lord Samuel, leader of the Liberal peers, and he chose to read his speech full face to the camera in the manner of traditional platform oratory; but Eden, who followed him a few nights later, used a more informal style, employing a questionner, Mr. Leslie Mitchell, who fed him rather gentle and well chosen points for departure. The Radio Editor of The Times applauded Eden's effort: "Political television may still be in its experimental stage, but last night's broadcast showed that it can be made a success."(13) In the Election of 1951 Mr. Eden was indefatigable in his work for the Conservative cause, partly, of course, because he had recovered his health, but also because of the place occupied by foreign affairs in the campaign and Eden's reputation in this field, (though it should be remembered that in 1950 he had spent most of his time discussing domestic and particularly economic concerns.)

D. E. Butler analyzed the election addresses, which are sent post-free by every candidate, and found, strangely, that only 31% of the Conservative candidates' addresses made reference to the state of affairs in Persia and Egypt and only 11%

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(12) D. E. Butler, The British General Election of 1951 (London, 1952), p. 99.

(13) The Times, October 17, 1951, p. 3.

mentioned the name of Anthony Eden. Even more odd is the fact that Mr. Churchill's name figured in slightly less than 30% of these document.(14) Taking the Tory addresses as a whole Butler found that 72% of them stressed the need for re-armament, 64% gave strong support for Empire and Commonwealth, and 52% the necessity for de-nationalizing steel. The subject most often mentioned was the Tory pledge to build 300,000 houses a year, this was mentioned in 76% of the addresses; 69% spoke of the Conservative commitment to maintain full employment, and the same per cent stressed the need to increase productivity. Whereas the party potentates used the radio and platform mainly to discourse on foreign policy, the lesser lights, at least when they wrote their addresses, had bread and butter issues more in mind. There were many differences between the Conservative and Labour addresses and only one major similarity of emphasis; 74% of the Labour addresses mentioned the Government's fine record in maintaining full employment and how this could be guaranteed for the future by the return of the Socialists. 72% of the douments emphasized the need for the maintenance of peace and how this could best be done under a Labour Government. Many of the addresses came right out and said that the return of a Conservative Government would increase the danger of war. There was surprisingly little reference made to the Socialist achievements of 1945-51; only 52% spoke of the Health Service, 29% education, and only 18% noted the nationalization of coal and other basic industries. Even

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(14) Butler, pp. 53-56 for all information on election addresses.

more strange is the fact that only 20% spoke of the need for further nationalization. They were, apparently, far from united in pride on Labour's re-armament program as only 52% mentioned it. Typically, only 24% of the candidates expressed the thought that greater productivity was required.

The Conservative Party put 617 candidates in the field, as did Labour, for the 625 seats at stake. The Election of 1951 saw a great reduction in the total number of candidates from the record high of 1,868 in 1950. Only 1,376 were nominated in 1951, due entirely to the subdued and chastened ambitions of the Liberal and Communist parties, who put 366 and 90 fewer hopefuls in the contest. This made the Election of 1951 a simpler and more clear cut affair, as there were 497 straight fights between Tories and Labourites. This is perhaps part of the reason the election was a more raucous contest. The Liberal Party had been all but demolished by the fiasco of 1950 and this eased out one of the great issues of that campaign: the Liberals are queering the pitch and a vote for a Liberal is a vote wasted. In 1950 Mr. Churchill's references to the Liberal leaders were almost invariably full of bombast, now he was more gentle, even to the point of arranging for a few election pacts where the Tories would step down and allow the Liberals to have a straight fight with Labour. The most notable of these was in Huddersfield West where Mr. Churchill's old friend, Lady Violet Bonham Carter, Asquith's daughter, was contesting. The great man was even gallant enough to make a major speech there on

October 15th urging her election; but, incidentally, he used the occasion to make a pitch to Liberals throughout the nation to support the Conservative Party as the surest defense of the grand old principles of Liberalism. This Tory kindness to Lady Violet did not, however, prevent them from pressing the Liberals hard in five places where they had sitting members or in a number of other's where they had some good chances.

It would take another and larger research project to determine the effect, if any or how much, of the resolution of the Conservative Party in 1949 to limit the financial contributions of their candidates for Parliament with the view of widening the strata of men and women who would become Tory hopefuls or M. P.'s. It was said at the time that this could have little effect on the selection of candidates for the election which had to come before July of 1950 because most of them had already been chosen, and the Election of 1951 saw only a small turnover in the candidates. From the statistics concerning Conservative candidates in 1951 gathered by Butler, it can be said that they conform rather well, as a group, to the traditional view of the Tory Party, just as the vital statistics for Labour candidates support the customary view of that party.

There were far fewer Jewish and non-conformist candidates contending for office as Tories than as Labour in the elections of 1950 and 1951. In the latter contest there were only two Jews seeking office under a Tory banner, neither successful, whereas there were twenty-three Jews in Labour's list and

seventeen were elected. Butler found that full-time schooling ended at the elementary stage for 120 Labourites and fifteen Conservatives; but only four of these Tories were winners, less than a third, whereas seventy-six of the Labour group was successful, almost two-thirds. However, there was a closer similarity between the parties on the number of candidates who had a university education: 328 Conservatives, with 64% successful, and 264 for Labour, with only 46% successful. Professional men and women were almost equally represented in both the parties, 264 for the Conservatives and 233 for Labour, but a Tory professional man had a much better chance of getting elected. The largest category for the Tories was the law but Labour was well ahead in teaching where they had 106 candidates to only 30 for the Conservatives. The party of the right quite naturally dominated the field of business, with the ubiquitous company directors predominating. There were 218 Tory candidates who could be listed under the heading of business to only 76 for Labour, and 66% of the former were elected to office to only 24% for the latter. Those persons who could be grouped under th heading of worker were 166 for Labour, with 108 successful, and 15 for the Conservatives, with only 1 man a winner. One interesting category was entitled "private means" and here there were 28 Tories and no Labourites; and the intriguing thing is that <u>all but one</u> of the Conservatives in this group were elected to Parliament. One is very tempted to say that the announced intention of the Conservative Party to broaden the selection of its candidates had little effect in the Election of 1951; their

successful candidates were mostly from the educated upper classes, and apparently the safest seats were still reserved entirely for the richest members of the party. It must be said, however, that Butler's statistics are not complete as 47 Conservative candidates did not answer his questionnaire and he cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information that was supplied him. A complete and accurate study of over 600 candidates would be a stupendous task and apparently it has not been done.(15)

The most striking and immediately apparent characteristic of the Conservative electoral strategy in 1951 was its sobriety. There was, it seems, a vivid awareness of the difficulties which they would face on the morrow of victory and a marked reluctance to make promises which were too glowing. With the country at war in Korea, expelled from Persia, facing a growing crisis in Egypt, and staring bankruptcy in the face, the Conservatives showed themselves disinclined to abuse extravagantly the Labour Government. It was the Socialists who did the stunting of 1951. Mr. Churchill, particularly, was more subdued than in 1945 or even 1950. This tone was sounded in the very beginning, in response to Mr. Attlee's announcement of the dissolution. Mr. Churchill said "The road will be hard and uphill....", Lord Woolton expressed the belief that "The country realizes that a difficult task and a cold winter awaits the new Government.", and Ralph Assheton thought that "...when we are returned to power we will be

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(15) Butler, pp. 35-43 for all statistical information on candidates.

faced with a most difficult situation, and however wise our policy might be, it will take some time to get the country out of the mess which the Socialists have got it into."(16)

In his first speech of the campaign, before a tremendous audience in Liverpool, Mr. Churchill gave expression to these sentiments:

> Let me make it clear that we do not intend to enter upon this electoral contest on the basis of Utopian promises....It would be very unwise and also wrong for us who have no special or official knowledge of the exact state of affairs to make all kinds of promises for the immediate future....Not only have we to face the present conditions, but the tide is still running and may even continue to run against us. Please remember that....we do not in any way underrate the difficulties with which a new Government will be faced. I do not promise or predict easy times. On the contrary, a new period of effort lies before us....(17)

It is in this light that the Conservative unwillingness to trumpet their pledge to build 300,000 houses a year must be viewed. Having read every Times of the election period, I can say that it was hardly mentioned by the leaders of the party, and when it was, the speaker invariably warned that in view of the problems gripping the nation it might not be possible to fulfill. The Tory Manifesto treated the subject in this way:

> The Conservative Party will give housing first priority after national defence, without which no home is safe. A year ago we announced our aim of building 300,000 houses a year. That figure stands. It will be reached as fast as rearmament allows. It could have been achieved if the Socialist Government had

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(16) The Times, September 20, 1951, p. 6.
(17) Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), Stemming the Tide, Speeches 1951 and 1952 by Winston S. Churchill, Boston, 1954), P. 123.

> tackled the problems of getting materials and raising productivity with determination and without political prejudice. (18)

The italicized words (my italics) indicate that perhaps the Tory policy makers did not really believe it could be done and were hedging. In fact, of course, it was done and defence expenditures were cut under a Conservative Government. During the campaign of 1951, though they gave their approval to the rearmament program, the Tories often implied that it might be cut under their leadership. In his broadcast speech of October 8th Mr. Churchill said, "A Conservative Government would have the full right to examine in severe detail the way in which the money is being spent and what is the fighting power and defensive security resulting from it." (19) Only in one of his speeches did Mr. Churchill even mention the Conservative promise of houses and then he did so very briefly, and with the tacit implication that they could not reach the target. (20)

On the evening of October 8th Mr. Churchill made his only broadcast of the campaign and from all accounts it was a distinctly good performance, though decidedly without the Churchillian pugnaciousness which had marked some of his political broadcasts of the past--by his standards it was a marvelous piece of understatement. He felt apparently that as the Socialists themselves had largely abandoned their

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peculiar

(18) Britain Strong and Free, A Statement of Conservative and Unionist Policy (London: Conservative and Unionist Central Office, 1951), p. 26.

(19) Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), Stemming the Tide, Speeches 1951 and 1952 by Winston S. Churchill, (Boston, 1954), p. 134.

(20) Ibid., pp. 161-162.

peculiar dogmas this subject could be treated with less vehemence. The theme that he seemed most anxious to exploit was his often stated claim that he and the Conservative Party shared handsomely in the creation of the social services:

> ...we need not magnify our differences....After all, the whole policy of social reform, the Welfare State as it is now called, was the policy of the National wartime Government of Government of which I was the head and which rested upon a Conservative and National Liberal majority in the House of Commons of 160.
>
> At the height of the war, in the spring of 1943... with the full agreement of the Cabinet of all parties, I unfolded what we called the Four Years Plan. This covered the Beveridge scheme of national compulsory contributory insurance....It included what is called the Butler Education Act, the Hudson Agricultural Policy, the National Health Service, Family Allowances and other important schemes....this was common policy. It was British policy, not party policy....it is true ...that four-fifths of the social legislation since the war was the agreed policy of all parties when I was Prime Minister with a large Conservative majority.(21)

The subject which necessarily dominated the election was foreign affairs. From Labour's side came the argument that Britain had done the best they could in the Persian imbroglio and, furthermore, they had set a good example, which the Tories decidedly would have have, of negotiations instead of the use of force. Persistently, Socialist orators tried to brand the Tories as the party of war and Mr. Churchill as the man of war. On election day The Times commented, "The warmongering charge has been designed throughout to distract the electors' attention from discontents at home. It is, of course, a shamfully irresponsible accusation."(22) Like the statement

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(21) Randolph S. Churchill (ed.), Stemming the Tide, Speeches 1951 and 1952 by Winston S. Churchill, (Boston, 1954), pp. 132-133.

(22) The Times, October 25, 1951, p. 7.

of the ex-Tory M. P. visting in New Zealand who said a little unemployment would be good for the nation, which figured so in the campaign of 1950, there were some remarks on the part of Conservative M. P.'s which could be cited, and were, by Labour speakers to prove their point. In June, 1951 Mr. Duncan Sandys said in the House of Commons: "I certainly think we should not hesitate to use troops or any other appropriate measures that may be necessary in order to discharge our responsibilities...in the Middle East."(23) Colonel Crosthwaite-Eyre, another Conservative M. P., in September, 1951, made a speech in which he said that the Russians should have been told to get out of Europe at Potsdam or be atom bombed, and that warships should be used to overawe the Egyptians and that troops should have been sent to Persia.(24)

Almost everyone of the Labour leaders spoke vehemently and often venomously on the warmongering theme. In May, 1951 Mr. Hugh Dalton actually said, "If we get Churchill and the Tory Party back at the next election we shall be at war with Russia within twelve months...."(25) At the Scarborough Conference, Mr. Bevan thought that Winston Churchill did not want war "...but the trouble with him is that he does not understand how to avoid it."(26) Mr. George Brown, the Minister of Works, went further when he said "That we would

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(23) D. E. Butler, The British General Election of 1951 (London, 1952), p. 122.
(24) Ibid., p. 122.
(25) Ibid., p. 119.
(26) Ibid., p. 122.

have been at war with Persia if Mr. Churchill had been at Downing Street is as sure as I am speaking here."[27] It was definitely hitting below the belt when Mr. Bevan asked his listeners at Scarborough, "Is the world which is changing round us to be shaped by the working class democratic forces or are we going to leave it to the people who have led us into two world wars and who are preparing for a third world war?"[28] Throughout the campaign Labour speakers kept up this kind of talk to such an extent that one gains the impression that they did not want to discuss other things. Dr. Edith Summerskill said "I believe that the women of this country are not prepared to sacrifice their husbands' and sons' lives in exchange for oil."[29] Mr. Ness Edwards spoke in a similar vein, "We have taken the view that Persia is entitled to rule her own country that British blood should not be shed to protect the British oil magnates."[30] Mr. Shinwell was more moderate when he said "I do not say that the Tory leaders want another war; although their backbenchers in Parliament are always talking that way. But a Labour Government is much more likely to keep the peace than is a Tory Government."[31] In a speech in Lewisham Mr. Morrison really epitomised the argument of Labour on this subject:

> I do not accuse the average Conservative of being warmonger, of thirsting for the shedding of blood, or of wishing to be involved needlessly in a world war. I do not say that and it would not be fair and it

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(27) Ibid.
(28) Ibid., p. 123.
(29) The Times, October 8, 1951, p. 3.
(30) Ibid.,
(31) Ibid., October 10, 1951, p. 7.

> would not be true. But it is their temperament; it is the background of their mental outlook. It is the semi-hysteria of the bulk of those Tory back-benchers that really alarms meaas to what a Tory Government would do if a Tory Government were put in power. Therefore, if the country wants peace it had better vote for the people who can most surely be relied upon to preserve peace....(32)

On the Sunday before the election Mr. Morrison and Mr. Shinwell delivered tremendous personal attacks on Mr. Churchill based mainly on the warmonger charge and even Mr. Attlee joined in the fun though with less vehemence. After charging that Churchill suffered from "an incurable vanity" and that he was "the greatest bogey of all time," Shinwell added, "smilingly" said The Times correspondent, "In spite of what I say, I like him very much. Let him pin his medals on and earn a well deserved retirement."(33) An alternative to the above campaign theme was that Mr. Churchill's persistent attacks on the policy of the Government and his charges that the country had never sunk so low were making it difficult for Britain to make her influence felt abroad, particularly with regard to small states. Mr. Shinwell thought "If foreigners should be mistrustful of the Labour Government it is because Mr. Churchill is telling the world that this country has never sunk so low....and all because the electors refuse to make him Prime Minister. Churchill is the greatest prima donna of all times."(34)

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(32) D. E. Butler, The British General Election of 1951 (London, 1952), p. 121.
(33) The Times, October 22, 1951, p. 2
(34) The Times, October 19, 1951, p. 2.

Mr. Churchill did not seem unduly perturbed by these attacks on him; he apparently preferred to hold a more statesmanlike pose and not reply in kind to Labour's taunts. In a speech at Plymouth on October 23rd he said

> The Socialists somewhat shamefacedly, and the Communists brazenly, make the charge that I am a 'warmonger.' This is a cruel and ungrateful accusation ....If I remain in public life...it is because I believe that I may be able to make an important contribution to the prevention of a Third World War....(35)

Most of the other Conservative leaders used, in one speech or another, similar sentiments to describe their outrage and contempt at the attacks on the great war leader. Speaking at Crewe Mr. L. S. Amery inadvertantly gave some support, though Labour did not take it up, to the charge that Churchill might have used or threatened force against Persia. He referred to the Government's earlier announcement to the effect that if the Iranians did not accept the judgment of the Hague Court, forcible occupation by British forces might be necessary. But, thought Mr. Amery,

> If that threat had been made by Mr. Churchill force would never have been required, for the Persians would have known that it represented a serious policy and a determination behind it. Made by Mr. Attlee it was treated for the feeble bluff it was.(36)

In spite of what one might say was excessive virulence in Labour's use of this warmonger issue, D. E. Butler thought they handled it successfully to their advantage.(37)

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(35) D. E. Butler, The British General Election of 1951 (London, 1952), p. 170.
(36) The Times, October 19, 1951, p. 2.
(37) Butler, p. 127.

In all of his speeches Mr. Churchill referred to events in Persia and Egypt. His remarks at Glasgow on October 17th may be taken as typical:

> The weakness shown by Mr. Attlee and Mr. Morrison over Abadan is one of the main reasons why the Egyptian mob has got out of hand. Naturally, the Egyptian mob was encouraged by the humiliations which they saw us swallow when we fled from Abadan. A firm and resolute policy over Abadan would very likely not only have saved--and without bloodshed--our vital interests there, but might actually prevented the bloodshed that is now taking place in Egypt. (38)

The one concrete proposal which Mr. Churchill advanced, beyond stating his conviction that a strong and stable Government would help prevent such outrages, was that Britain should associate the United States and France in the maintenance of peace and order in the Middle East. Several times in the campaign he repeated remarks which he had made a year before:

> We are no longer strong enough ourselves to bear the whole political burden...in the Mediterranean, or even to take the leading part in the diplomatic control of that theatre.(39)

Dr. Charles Hill, the famous B. B. C. "Radio Doctor", who had been such a phenomenal success on the air wave in 1950, spoke of the Persian crisis in his usual vivid style to a vast radio audience:

> Abroad, any little country can put its fingers to its nose at us and get away with it nowadays. They all know that they will get only a little typewritten note of complaint: stand up for your country, and its warmongering--scuttle and you are a sweet little peacemaker. No wonder British prestige has gone down. (40)

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(38) Churchill, p. 159.
(39) Ibid, p. 137.
(40) The Times, October 17, 1951, p. 3.

In the closing Tory broadcast Mr. Eden gave a carefully reasoned appraisal of the blunders which the Government had made in the Persian crisis and indicated alternatives which might have made an equitable compromise possible. Several times Mr. Churchill said that he knew the country would feel better when it knew that Anthony Eden, "my trusted friend and deputy," was conducting the foreign affairs of the nation once again.

According to D. E. Butler the increase in the cost of living was the one issue above all others "...on which the Conservatives felt they could win the election."(41) This was certainly the major theme of the Tory poster and leaflet effort. The Conservative Central Office distributed millions of graphs showing the steep rise in the cost of living under Socialism. This was certainly no false issue because, according to statistics gathered by the International Monetary Fund, the cost of living in Britain had risen 24.5% between the first of 1947 and the middle of 1951. This compared with 120% in France, 16% in the U. S. A. and 13% in Italy.(42) Though he did not make much of a splash in the campaign, Mr. R. A. Butler made this his main issue and Eden's telecast certainly emphasized it, but it really must be admitted that it took a strictly secondary position to foreign policy. In his telecast Eden produced a graph which showed the steep rise in the cost of living, but apparently, though the figures were correct, his paper was too narrow, thus making the curve look, so Labour

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(41) Butler, P. 108.
(42) The Times, October 22, 1951, p. 6.

thought, dishonestly severe. This kicked off a minor issue for Labour. Mr. Morgan Phillips, Secretary to the Labour Party, told a news conference "We repeat...the Tory graph is a fake. It has been distributed in millions throughout the country on leaflets and we think it ought to be withdrawn."(43) In the Labour telecast which followed, Mr. Christopher Mayhew attempted to show "three dishonesties" in the Tory graph. He added in a quip, "Crippen was the first criminal to be caught by wireless. The Conservative Central Office are the first dishonest electioneers to be caught by Television."(44)

The Socialists tried to blame the rise in prices on the great world rearmament over which they had little control and, furthermore, their policies had kept prices down whereas a Tory reversion to a "free-for-all" would cause price increases, unemployment and scarcity. Mr. Churchill would not accept this. In his opinion

> The chief cause of the rise in prices here has been the devaluation of the pound....In the nine months between the devaluation...and the outbreak of the Korean War, the wholesale price index rose by eleven points.... This decline in the value of money represents a cut which falls most heavily on the shoulders of those least able to bear it....We must get back to honest money.(45)

According to Butler, the Central Office leaflet most in demand in the constituencies had a picture of a pound note on its cover with a quarter torn away. Inside was an exposition of the cost of living theme: "One of its main points was the demonstration of how recent price increases were due to

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(43) The Times, October 19, 1951, p. 3.
(44) Ibid.
(45) Churchill, pp. 144-145.

devaluation rather than, as Labour alleged, the outbreak of the Korean War."[46] Perhaps housing and the bread and butter issues figured more prominently in the constituency campaigns than on the national level; unfortunately, I had little evidence on this subject.

One of the secondary issues which the Conservatives tried to exploit was "Bevanism" and the split in the Labour Party over several articles of policy. Mr. Churchill, on this subject, dropped the demure pose which he had adopted for the 1951 Election. Speaking at Woodford he said

> I warn you solemnly that the mass growth of the Bevan movement inside the Socialist Party, which the Scarborough Conference revealed, may make the return of a Socialist Government a real blow to our hopes of escaping a Third World War....It is certain that a vote for Bevanite Socialism is in fact, whatever its intention, a vote which increases the hazard of a world catastrophe.(47)

This was, presumably, because of Mr. Bevan's objections to vast sums spent on weapons and his hostility to America. Mr. Churchill felt that a "Bevan-tinted Government" would rob Britain of much of her influence in Washington and therefore increases the danger of war; whereas, he and Mr. Eden would "...be able to rebuild those relations of cordial and intimate comradeship and understanding with America which played so important a part in the war." "For," he said, "I have many friends in the great Republic and they have often listened to me...."; but, of course, "I have never accepted a position of subservience to the United States....they have

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(46) Butler, pp. 108-109.
(47) Churchill, p. 139.

never resented the very blunt and plain things I found it necessary to say to them from time to time." He felt that "There can be no greater danger to world peace than for the Bevan movement...in the Labour Party to become representative of Britain in American minds."(48) Mr. W. S. Duthie, running for re-election in one of the safest Conservative seats in the nation, wrote this wild remark in his election address:

> Aneurin Bevan is now the leader of the Labour Party in everything but name. He has solidly behind him the gullible and the mischief makers. I have studied this man day after day for six years, and I consider him the greatest evil that has ever confronted the British Parliamentary Institution.(49)

Dr. Charles Hill expressed similar ideas but in his own inimitable, very calculated style:

> A big issue divides the Attleeites and the Bevanites ....But Bevan is winning. He was top of the roll for the Socialist executive at the Scarborough Conference, and the Minister of Defence was chucked out. Think of it--Shinwell too moderate for 'em! Yes, Bevan is waiting in the wings to step on the stage when the elction is over. Able man, yes; strong man, yes; dangerous man, yes. The thought of Nye Bevan as Prime Minister...fairly turns the tummy over ....What's more, there is the real stuff of the dictator in the chap. The Tito of Tonypandy. What a thought. But it's a real live danger....A team can't do its stuff--whatever the stuff--with two captains, one trying to kick the other....(50)

D. E. Butler thinks that though some Conservative speakers used extreme language on the Bevan issue "It was perfectly legitimate to observe that an appreciable minority of the Party composing the Government was opposed to a major point in its policy...."(51)

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(48) Churchill, pp. 138-139.
(49) Butler, p. 110. 38% of the Tory election addresses made mention of the Bevanite split. Mr. Duthie was the M. P. for Banff in Scotland, which he won 16,562 to 6,806.
(50) The Times, October 17, 1951, p. 3.
(51) Butler, pp. 111-112.

As has already been noted the alternate Tory bombast and siren song to the Liberal leaders and voters in 1950 was reduced to little more than a gentle reminder in 1951. One of Mr. Churchill's happiest speeches of 1951 was the one he made on behalf of Lady Violet Bonham Carter, and it was the only one in which he made a real pitch for Liberal votes:

> More than forty years ago I sat myself in a Left-wing Government....I look back with pride to the great measures of social reform...for which I have been responsible both as a Liberal and a Conservative Minister. I find comfort in the broad harmony of thought which prevails between the modern Tory democracy and the doctrines of the famous Liberal leaders of the past.(52)

Whenever Mr. Churchill was in this kind of mood he almost invariably said very much the same thing, but apparently he could never convince the electorate that he was a sincere reformer; they loved him as a person but they knew that war and foreign affairs were more in his line.

Another minor issue which Labour tried to exploit arose when Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, who, in the campaign, almost invariably stuck to domestic affairs, said on the radio that the Conservatives would not enact legislation affecting unions without first consulting with them in a round table conference. Various Labour speakers took this to mean that the Tories had something wicked on their minds to do to the trade unions. Mr. Patrick Gordon Walker said "I do not see what it can mean but that the Conservatives have some legislative action up their sleeve which they expect would harm and anger the trade unions." Mr. Morrison several times told the unions to

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(52) Churchill, p. 148.
(53) The Times, October 17, 1951, p. 3.

beware of Tory plots. Mr. Churchill and others saw fit to deny any evil intent. At Woodford Churchill said "The Conservative Party have no intention of initiating any legislation affecting trade unions....We hope to work with the trade unions in a loyal and friendly spirit...." He was even willing to drop the Tory demand that opting-in to the political levy of the unions should be the rule.(54) This is surprising, as the business of contracting out put the onus on the independent-minded worker and one would have hoped that the Tories would have continued to fight against what was a fundamentally unjust provision. Here expediency seemed to rule. The only man to speak bluntly about the need for greater productivity and the elimination of go-slow tactics in labour was Sir John Anderson, and he was not running for office and not identified with any party, though he had served in Churchill's wartime Governments.(55) The Conservatives were embarrassingly quiet on the subject.

Mr. Churchill's closing speech, at Plymouth on October 23rd, fell below the standards of his great orations of the past, though it certainly very carefully covered the issues of 1951 in a way which was not offensive. It had its poignant moments, however; as, for example, when he said, in praising the duputy leader, "Mr. Eden will carry the torch of Tory democracy when other and older hands have let it fall."(56) Speaking of his belief that he had a contribution to make to the cause of peace he said "I pray indeed that I may have

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(54) Churchill, pp. 139-140.
(55) The Times, October 25, 1951, p. 10.
(56) Churchill, p. 169.

this opportunity. It is the last prize I seek to win....all the daydreams of my youth have been surpassed. It is therefore with a single purpose and a strong sense of duty that I remain at my post as Leader of the Conservative Party through these baffling and anxious years."(57) Having heard these words on a recording I can testify to their powerful impact. He spoke them slowly and with great emotion; but, of course, they could move only the audience of some 20,000 at Plymouth--he was not making the closing broadcast this time and never was to again; but the prize he sought was his, though by a disappointingly low margin. In spite of all his laurels he had to take a backseat to half a dozen or more British party leaders in the matter of winning elections.

Little had been left to chance by Lord Woolton in the matter of organization. Only a few hopeless mining seats were without a paid agent. The Conservative Party had a wide edge in the matter of full-time, trained, certificated, and well paid agents, though Labour with its trade union associations had perhaps less need. In Birmingham the Conservatives had actually reduced the number of their paid staff. In the Election of 1950, in spite of a large and seemingly quite efficient organization in Birmingham, the Tories had made pitifully small gains. The old Chamberlain machine, which had been largely wrecked in 1945, showed few signs of life and the results of 1951 merely confirmed this. This is one more proof, if any be needed, that potent organizations cannot,

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(57) Ibid., p. 170.

of themselves, win elections. Between the Elections of 1950 and 1951 the national membership of the Conservative Party increased but not appreciably, and the leadership at the Central Office remained virtually intact. According to D. E. Butler,

> In their Central Office, as in their regional headquarters and constituency organizations, the Conservatives had bigger premises than their rivals, larger and much better paid staffs, and a generally higher level of efficiency....There is no doubt that the Conservatives managed their relations with the press better, that they secured more postal votes, and that they completed a more thorough canvas of the electorate.(58)

The large increase in the postal vote over 1950 (742,605 compared with 471,088) and the greater efficiency of the Conservatives in this regard may have meant the difference between victory and defeat in a dozen or more constituencies. The Conservative candidates spent a total of £479,000, or an average of £773 each. This was 89% of the legally permitted maximum. This compared to an average of £658 for Labour candidates and £488 for the Liberals.(59)

On October 23rd The Times said editorially that "The need for change is unmistakable."(60) On polling day it said "The strongest argument for rejecting the Labour Government to-day is that after six years in office they have exhausted their capacity for creative thinking."(61) Before and throughout the election most observers were agreed

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(58) Butler, p. 30.
(59) Ibid., p. 139.
(60) The Times, October 23, 1951, p. 5.
(61) The Times, October 25, 1951, p. 7.

that the Conservatives would win. The pollsters supplied most of the hard evidence for this assumption, but as the election progressed even they had to show the gap narrowing between Conservative and Labour, but with the former still ahead. On the eve of the election the British Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) showed the Tories 49.5% and Labour 47.0%. The Daily Express called it 50.0% and 46% and Research Services put it at 50.0% and 43.0%. In every case there was an exaggerated prediction for the Liberals. The large number of people who persisted in saying that they had not made up their minds was a major imponderable. Whether they were Liberals with no place to go or independents who had voted Labour before is not known, but apparently this group broke heavily for Labour at the last moment to give them a higher pereentage of the votes than received by the Conservatives in the election.(62) It was not until 5 P. M. on the day after the poll that the Tories clinched their 313th success, thereby guaranteeing that they would be able to organize the House. The final results were:

| Party: | No. of seats in 1950 Election: | % of vote in 1950: | No. of seats in '51 Election | % of vote in 1951: |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Conservative and Associates: | 298 | 43.5% | 321 | 48.0% |
| Labour Party: | 315 | 46.1% | 295 | 48.8% |
| Liberal Party: | 10 | 9.1% | 6 | 2.5% |
| Communist Party: | 0 | 0.3% | 0 | 0.1% |
| Others: | 2 | 1.0% | 3 | 0.6% |

(62) Butler, pp. 238-239.

The total number of votes cast for the Labour and Conservative Parties in the Election of 1951 was, respectively, 13,948,385 and 13,724,418. The Liberals polled 730,551, their lowest total in the 20th century, a stunning decrease of 1,950,768 from 1950. Much of this loss can be explained by the fact that they were running only 109 instead of 475 candidates, but even with this more modest stake they lost 66 of their 150 deposits. The Liberal vote was well down even where they had sitting members or had had sitting members in the recent past. Apparently, the electors understood the need to give one of the major parties a workable majority, that the times were too serious for protest voting, rugged but futile traditionalism, or mere frivolity. The Liberals lost four of their sitting members, including Lady Megan Lloyd George, who had sat for Anglessy since the Liberal big push of 1929. The major parties split these gains two each and it can be said that in the two constituencies where Labour won, a Conservative intervention made it possible, and vice versa. One can understand the Tories' desire to smash the Liberals but Labour's gesture in the two instances where Conservatives won from Liberals seems more cruel than anything else. The Conservatives did not, however, oppose in the other five Liberal held constituencies. The one new Liberal, not Lady Violet, came to Westminster largely because the Conservatives abstained from entering the race. When Parliament opened Mr. Churchill pointed out that the Liberal Party's survival was mostly due to Tory generosity.

This was a cruel taunt!

There was a slight decrease in the percentage of eligible people voting, no doubt mainly traceable to the absence of Liberal candidates in hundreds of constituencies, but it is interesting to note that the total increase in the votes received by the major parties, and both polled more than ever in their history, almost exactly equaled the total decrease of votes which the Liberals sustained from 1950 to 1951. Butler thinks that the votes which the Liberal Party lost divided about six-to-four in favor of the Conservatives and on this basis it would be sufficient to account for eight of the twenty-one seats which the Tories won from Labour.(63) After studying the results in every constituency I incline to a higher percentage of ex-Liberals voting Conservative. There were seventeen instances where a Tory won a seat from Labour, mostly by quite small margins, where there had been a Liberal candidate in 1950. The Conservatives won only three seats from Labour in a three-cornered fight and in every instance the Liberal vote was well down. In the Blackley Division of Manchester, for example, the Liberal vote was down by 4,030 votes. In 1950 Labour had a majority of 42--in 1951 the Tories won it by 2,272. In the Dulwich Division (London) the Liberal candidate received 1,627 less votes in 1951--Labour's margin had been 1,325 but in 1951 the Tories won by 691. Only in one instance (Doncaster) did a Conservative

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(63) Butler, p. 243.

challenger defeat a Labour incumbent in a seat which had not been fought by a Liberal in 1950. It is not too much to say that the Conservative Party won power only because the near corpse of British Liberalism hardly breathed in the Election of 1951. The victory could not be, then, grounds for any proud boasting.

All over the country there was, however, a small and remarkably uniform swing to the Conservative Party. This averaged 1.1% over the whole country; it varied from 0.1% in the East End of London to 2.8% in the London boroughs. It was greater, of course, where a Liberal candidate had fought in 1950 and did not fight in 1951. The swing to the Tories in 1950 had been 3.4%--the tiny additional movement of votes (1.1%) was sufficient to answer Mr. Churchill's call for "one more heave," but the Conservatives were still a long way from the predominance which they held in the Parliament of 1935, the lost ground was far from all regained. Likely they would not have won at all in 1951 except for the fact, according to Butler, that there is an accidental bias in the electoral system which is worth 500,000 votes for the Tories. This accounts for the fact that they won a comfortable majority even though Labour outpolled them by 231,000.(64)

Despite the great Tory exertions since 1945 to emphasize their democratic and libertarian principles; despite the prodigious efforts made to put the Conservative electoral machine and organization in good order; despite the steep rise in the

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(64) Butler, pp. 243-244.

cost of living; despite the balance of payments crisis; despite the continuation of rationing and wartime restrictions; despite the still serious shortage of proper housing; despite Britain's imperial retreat, the humiliation of Abadan, and the growls of ex-client state Egypt; despite the tired and wan facade of the Fabour front bench and their serious internal divisions; and despite the vigorous look of the Opposition leaders the Conservative Party was unable to persuade a majority or even a plurality of citizens to trust them with the direction of the nation's affairs. The Election of 1951 was certainly no repudiation of Labour and nothing to be read as a real vote of confidence for the Tories. It was as if the country was taking them on trial but putting them on notice to be very careful. The general comment of the press was: victory but not triumph for the Conservatives, defeat but not rout for Labour. The News Chronicle expressed the Liberal view, which was perhaps not too inaccurate, when it said "...the country has got rid of a party it does not want in favour of one it does not trust."(65) The Times, which had been very pro-Tory during the campaign, felt that "...the Labour Party leaders could draw considerable consolation from the results."(66)

It seems to me amazing that Labour did so well. Were the memories of the Baldwin-Chamberlain era--with its depressed economy and foolish defence and foreign policy--too much alive in the minds of the voters? Did the voters really

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(65) Butler, p. 244.
(66) Ibid.

believe the old catch phrase so often repeated: "You can't trust the Tories." Did they fear the adventures that Mr. Churchill might have in store for them? In this connection did the Labour war-monger charge hurt? Mr. Churchill said he thought it did and badly. Or, perhaps, was the six year Labour rule generally regarded by the average citizen as a good thing? Did they believe Mr. Attlee when he said that Labour had levelled up rather than down? Perhaps the man-in-the-street understood the need for austerity and that Britain would have had to draw in its belt under any post-war Government. At least, under Labour, there had been fair shares.

The Tories had to prove, not that they could give England back her former glorious role, but that they could keep the peace, restrain American impetuosity, preserve prosperity and full employment, and build the houses the country needed. Only because the Liberal Party was a shambles could Messrs. Churchill and Eden with all their glamour gain the narrow but workable majority which would give them the opportunity to prove the country that it could trust the Tories. As The Economist said after the election:

> The magnitude of the task they have inherited is also the measure of their opportunity. If they demonstrate the vision that has been lacking in the Labour Party they can revive their country and destroy forever the identification of conservatism with the evils of the thirties.(67)

The results of the Elections of 1955 and 1959 seemed to indicate that they had been successful in ridding the party of the liabilities that had so figured in the Elections of 1950 and 1951.

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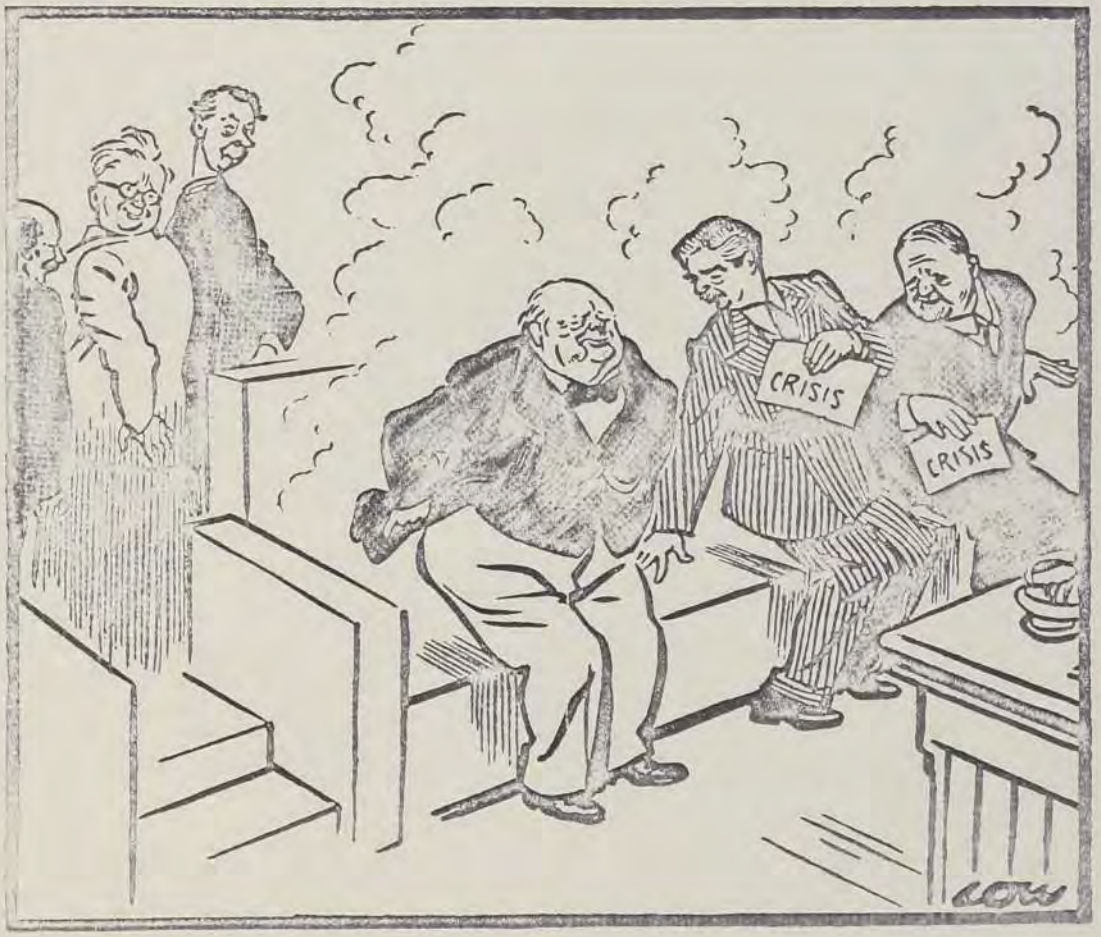
(67) The Economist, November 3, 1951, p. 1014.

DAILY HERALD 28th April 1950

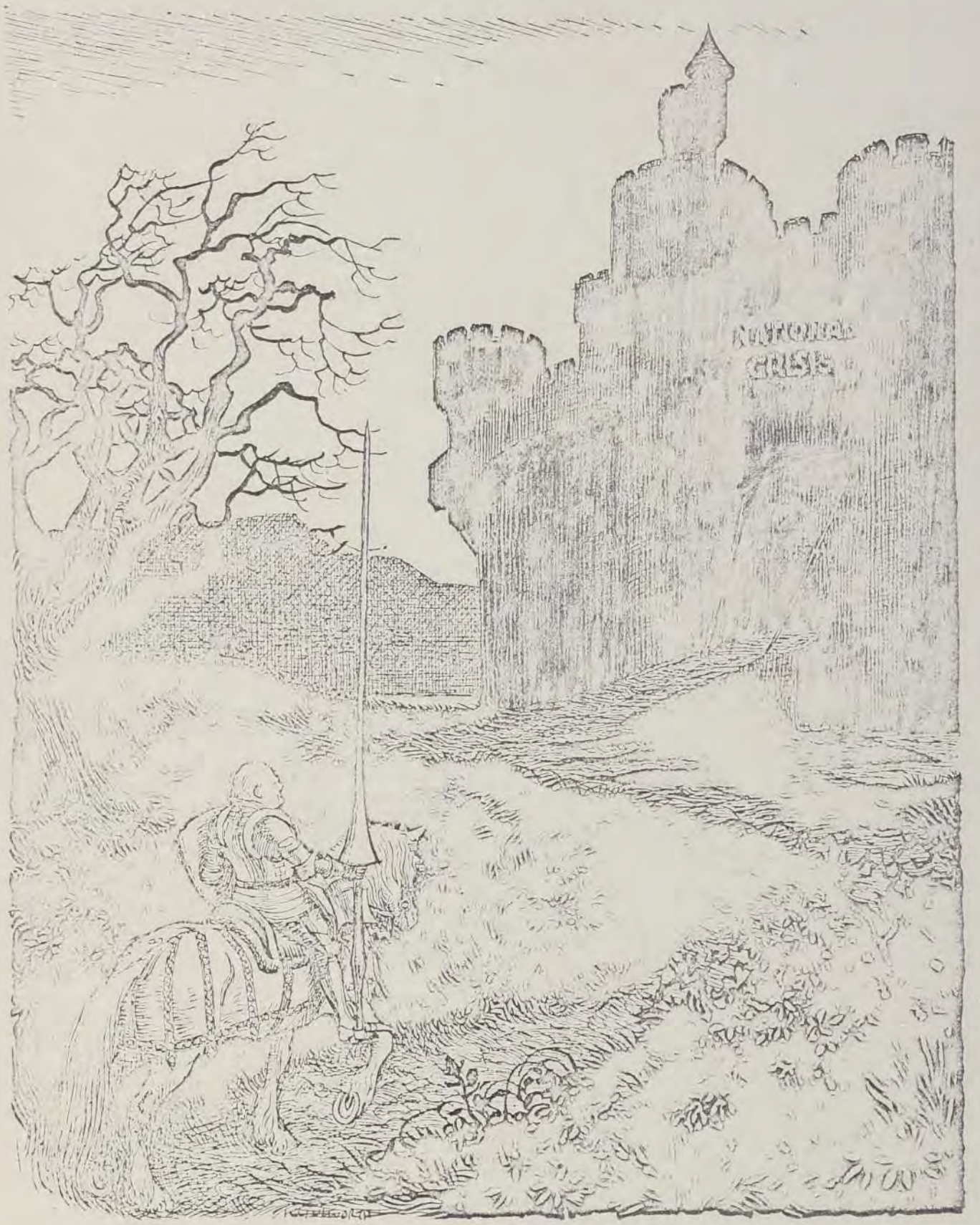

MIRACLE MAN

DAILY HERALD 30th October 1951




HOT SEAT

PUNCH, October 31 1951



CHILDE WINSTON TO THE DARK TOWER CAME

# CHAPTER VII

## THE CONCLUSION

In The Reconstruction of the Conservative Party of Great Britain, 1945-51, it has been my purpose to detail and analyze the prodigious efforts which enabled the Tory Party to overcome the dramatic rejection and humiliation which it suffered at the hands of the British electorate in 1945. One had to cast his mind back to the Election of 1906 to discover an electoral result of such a conslusive and revolutionary nature, though it is well to recall that then the Tories were even more thoroughly vanquished than in 1945. The Election of 1945 has now taken its place alongside those other great divides in British History. It was another "Bloodless Revolution."

The history of Toryism contains many instances of comebacks: from the mighty "Whig Supremacy" of the eighteenth century, from the rout of 1832, from the acute internal divisions of the mid-nineteenth century when the Whigs vanished, and from the Liberal ascendency of 1905-16. It has lived down periods when it inflicted mediocre and even disastrous leadership upon the nation. It has proved itself to be a remarkably adaptable and enduring political organism. Traditionally the party of monarchy, aristocracy, church, and empire, it has not, however, allowed itself to settle for very long into a reactionary stance. It has chosen to identify itself at important moments with reform. It has not been afraid to "catch the Whigs bathing and steal their clothes." The Conservative Party has not hesitated to use the power of the state for the alleviation of social distress or the control

of commerce and industry. It has not had to explain away any ideological prejudice against the firm use of the levers of power.

The Conservative Party has believed in the tenets of empiricism, pragmatism, and compromise. Because of this, the Tories have been able to adjust to the changing political fashions and retain their unity. A buttress to this has been the deference which they have always paid to their leadership.

In reality, the "New Conservatism" was directed toward the problems and memories of the 'thirties and before, as indeed, was much of Labour's ideology. It should not be surprising, therefore, that when the Tories gained office in 1951, they forgot about many of the things which they had promoted in Opposition. Their stress on the "Opportunity State" in the 1950's was, in reality, more suited to the times. The unofficial slogan of Macmillan in the Election of 1959, "You never had it so good," in spite of its strong and unpalatable flavor of raw materialism, was better suited to the post-war generation with their full wage packets.

The most important result of the work of Lord Woolton and R. A. Butler was that it created the picture of a party busy with its work--seeking and thrusting--alive to new ideas--exciting, dynamic, creative, and certain to return to power. Much of this was mere illusion, but what is thought to be true is almost as important as what is true. The Times certainly gave ample evidence of taking the "New Conservatism" at face value. The Woolton-Butler reformation certainly deserved praise, but it should have been, as I have tried to do, carefully qualified. Their work should not have been regarded as a radical change in the traditional outlook or practice of the party.

It is my conclusion that Woolton and Butler had less effect on the vitals of the party than many thought. I could not discover any evidence to support a supposition that there were great changes in the nature of the local associations. The constituencies were not inclined to allow the center to order them about. Clearly, they did not want to give up their traditional powers in the realms of finance and candidate selection. One suspects that the same people who had run the associations continued to run them. Woolton's work toward increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the party machine could not help but be beneficial, but it is difficult to measure this in terms of seats won, though a good party machine was probably capable of winning anywhere up to a dozen seats through efficient electioneering alone.

The effectiveness of Butler's work on policy re-definition is even more difficult to measure. Much of it was obviously just talk--the spinning of words and ideas. The most important policy commitment was not the celebrated Industrial Charter, which contained a number of general principles which never took effect, but the pledge to build 300,000 houses a year, and this came only after a revolt from the floor at the 1950 Annual Conference.

One of the chief things to be desired in politics, is to create a favorable climate of opinion for your cause and an aura of determination to win. Even if the Woolton-Butler Reconstruction was only a triumph of appearances over reality, and I believe it was more than this, it still succeeded in serving a legitimate aim of practical politics. The energy which went into the Conservative revival, and the impact which it had on the press, are quite impressive; and should serve

as a model for any right-wing party seeking to revivify itself.

The Parliamentary Opposition of the Conservative Party did not reflect this reform mindedness. Under Churchill's leadership, it represented an older strain of Toryism, but this too must have served a function. However, had it not been for Woolton and Butler, this image of the party might have been the pre-dominate one, with dire consequences in the Election of 1950. Conservative Reconstruction depended on the smooth operation of a triumvirate: Churchill, Woolton, and Butler.

The reader will no doubt wonder where my treatment differs from that of J. D. Hoffman, whose book, The Conservative Party in Opposition, 1945-1951, so closely parallels this thesis. His book was published well after I had begun my research. I did not learn of the book and get it in hand until I had completed over half my project. I relied upon his book as little as possible, preferring instead to get my information from primary sources. Hoffman worked at the University of London and had access to a great many more sources than I did here in Charlottesville. He had the co-operation to some degree of the Conservative Central Office. I do not, however, believe that Hoffman's book goes that much beyond what I would have been able to do without the knowledge of his book. I have relied upon him hardly at all in four of my seven chapters. Only in Chapters III and IV did I make extensive use of Hoffman. In many places I have made a more rigorous use of The Times and other periodicals than Hoffman did. Like this work, his is more of a narrative history. His conclusions on the effect of the Tory revival

were, like mine, mostly negative. He does not, however, suggest the qualifications which I do with regard to the fund and membership drives. Through a thorough use of The Times I was able to catch Mr. Hoffman in a number of errors of fact; doubtlessly he could do the same to me. I could have done a better thesis without Hoffman because I did occasionally use him as a crutch. If his book had not been published, I could have likely turned this into a Ph. D. project. Alas, now that is excluded.

One cannot help but be impressed by the Tory Party's flexibility, the sense of strategy and timing possessed by its leadership, and the will to power--the belief in predestined leadership--that actuates it. From 1945 to 1951 the party managed the feat of monopolizing the right and pre-empting the center, without noticeable internal strains. When it came Labour's turn to face a long period in Opposition, it did not show any similar unity or purpose.

Care must be taken to avoid exaggerating the Tory revival--the results of the Election of 1951 were too close to allow any facile generalizations. It is likely that even that narrow victory was more the gift of Labour than as a result of anything the Tories did. After a close reading of the news of the period, when hammer blow after hammer blow fell upon the country, it seems incredible that the Conservative Party was not swept overwhelmingly into power in 1950. The best that the Tories were able to do against a physically and spiritually exhausted Labour Government was to slip into power in 1951 with a slim majority of seventeen on a vote smaller than that gathered by their opponents.

It is, therefore, impossible to say that Woolton and Butler made the victory possible in 1951. There were so many other factors. It is not, however, unreasonable to say that their work provided the vital overlay between victory and defeat. By default, it can be argued that they saved the Conservative Party from decline.

The Tory Party became the only one in modern British political history to increase its majority in the House of Commons in three successive elections, but the contests of 1964 and 1966 have erased most of those gains. Just the other day the Manchester Guardian Weekly commented on Mr. Edward Heath's changes in his Shadow Cabinet, "Mr. Hogg is not an ideal choice for the Home Office--will he be wholly in sympathy with the Conservatives' new liberalism?"[1] Well, here we go again. I trust that the Tory hat is not empty of the rabbits which were so prolific in the period 1945-51.

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[1] The Manchester Guardian Weekly, April 21, 1966, p. 1.

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