

THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE LABOUR LEFT

THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE LABOUR LEFT:

Party Transformation and the Decline of Factionalism 1979-97

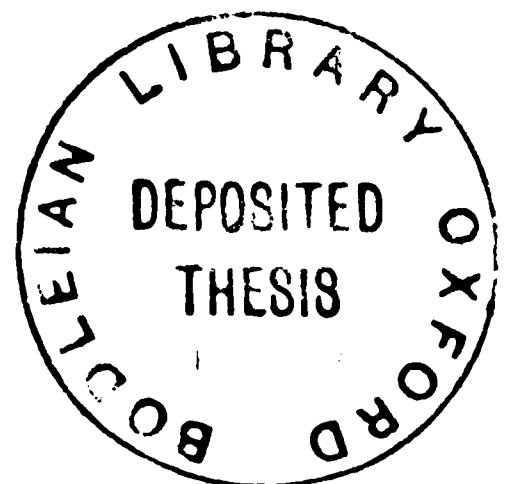
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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Politics in the Faculty of Social Studies at the
University of Oxford

MICHAELMAS TERM 2000 (i.e. 2001) ^{MT}

97,692 words excluding bibliography and technical appendices



Abstract

The Labour Party and the Labour Left: *Party Transformation and the Decline of Factionalism 1979-97*

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Michaelmas Term 2000 [i.e. 2001] HT

This Thesis examines the relationship between the organisational and ideological transformation of the Labour Party, and the decline of intra-party factionalism by the groups of the Labour Left during the period from 1979 to 1997. Two central questions are considered. First, whether the fragmentation and decline of the Left during this period can best be understood by examining the interplay between organisational and ideological factors at *both* the party *and* individual group levels. Second, whether 'New Labour' continues to exhibit some of the key traits of attitudinal dissent among its grassroots membership, despite the lack of an organisational apparatus within which sub-groups of activists could challenge the centralising tendencies of party leaders and influence the direction of party policy.

Labour's ideological and organisational transformation had a number of important consequences for the prevalence of intra-party factionalism. The organisational reforms meant that Labour ceased to represent Duverger's 'branch-mass' type of party. Furthermore, party leaders regained centralised control over members and activists through the resurgence of Michels' 'iron law of oligarchy'. The depth of Labour's ideological transformation also reinforced the narrowing of the ideological gap between (radical) grassroots members and ordinary (moderate) voters, such that May's 'law of curvilinear disparity' appeared extinct inside Blair's New Labour. Labour's transformation had a remarkably fragmenting effect at the group-level. The Labour Left was a collection of various groupings, each of which displayed different structural properties and ideological characteristics. There was no single organisational form of Labour Left factionalism, nor was there any common sense of ideological purpose. The processes of party transformation would act only to further the Left's fragmentation and cement its decline.

However, it would be premature to talk of New Labour as a party free from dissent. Despite the dissolution of the Labour Left, New Labour's grassroots membership has retained some of the principal features of factionalism. Using data from original survey research among party members, it is suggested that New Labour has encouraged new types of 'objective' and 'subjective' factionalism. The kind of factionalism typified by the Labour Left of the 1970s and 1980s may have disappeared, but we should not preclude the growth of new dimensions of conflict between party leaders and grassroots members.

Acknowledgements

The idea for this doctoral thesis was conceived some years ago when, shortly after my election to a sabbatical post at Essex's students' union, the latest editions of *Militant*, *Tribune* and *Socialist Worker* found their way into my pigeonhole. Presumably my predecessor was an avid reader. Since student politics was not always the most onerous of occupations, I devoted that morning to reading them from cover-to-cover. By Christmas, I had discovered the basements of a number of London's leading 'alternative' bookshops where I quite happily whiled away an hour or two leafing through back issues of the newspapers and magazines published by dozens, if not hundreds, of Left groups. Many of their column inches were devoted to the intricacies of their own particular reading of socialist political thought, but they had one thing in common. They spent a lot of time talking about and organising around the activities of the Labour Party, whether it was in government or in opposition. As an active party member, I found the extent of such fragmentation among the British Left – particularly the Labour Left – a fascinating, yet inherently disappointing phenomenon. From there sprang many box files and document wallets crammed full of paraphernalia on groups ranging from Labour Left Briefing to the Workers' Revolutionary Party, and beyond. An unusual hobby.

I would like to pay particular thanks to my co-supervisors, Professor Anthony Heath and Dr. Michael Hart, who have provided constant encouragement, enthusiasm and gentle direction throughout this project. They have kept me focused on my research and writing when there were so many pressures to do otherwise. Also to my examiners, Dr. David Butler of Nuffield College and Professor Patrick Seyd of the University of Sheffield for taking the time to review the thesis, for their advice and support, and ideas for future work in this field of research. I would like to acknowledge the financial assistance of the Economic and Social Research Council (Award No. R00429624259). However, the 'DPhil-after-MPhil' peculiarities of the ESRC's funding arrangements meant that it was imperative to undertake part-time work. I am particularly grateful in this regard to Felicity Fuller, Andrew Passey, Angie Buhagiar, Nicola Poniekiewski and Sally Cooke for the hours of data-entry work. Also to Kitson Smith, Lois McNay and Robert Currie for giving me invaluable experience of lecturing and undergraduate tutorial teaching.

I express my sincere thanks to the staff of the Bodleian Library (Room 132), Politics Faculty Library and Nuffield College Library in Oxford, the British Library of Political and Economic Science at the LSE, the Humanities reading room at the British Library in London, Stephen Bird at the National Museum of Labour History in Manchester, Piers Brendon and Allen Packwood at the Churchill College Archive Centre in Cambridge, Neil Kinnock and Jan Royall in Brussels, Vladimir Derer of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Sally Morgan at Number 10, David Sanders at the University of Essex, Professor Pippa Norris of the Kennedy School of Government in Harvard, Professor Vernon Bogdanor at Brasenose, Biba McLellan of Fine Art Productions/BBC, Mike Naughton at *Tribune*, Nigel Farrow of Ashgate Publishing Company, Anand Menon, Mandy Roberts, Roeland Beerten, Kirsty Deacon and Wendy Williams, College Secretary at Brasenose.

I would like to thank those who helped with my survey of Labour Party members in Oxford and Tottenham. Particular mention should be made of the hundreds of party members who gave up their time to respond to the survey, and also to the officers of the local constituency parties without whose support the survey would not have been possible – Ann Black (Oxford East), John Pedley (Oxford West & Abingdon), Stephen Brasher and Julie Gallagher (Tottenham).

I wish to pay heartfelt thanks to my friends and family for lots of laughter, days out, nights in and, occasionally of course, a bottle of wine or two to help things along. Thanks to Alan, Eileen, Amanda, Drew, Ernie, Judith, Julian, Ju, Tash, Leah, George, Nat, Sarah, Rita, Sue, Iain, Tim, and Tom. My final words should go to Rob and to Mum and Dad for their unwavering support, enthusiasm for all things political, sound advice and, above all, their patience with me. I genuinely could not have done it without you. I would like to dedicate this thesis to you with love.

Oxford.
March 2001.

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1

Introduction

“We have been promised disturbance and uproar in the Labour movement by Frances Curren speaking with the authentic voice of Militant. We have also been given Militant’s definition of ‘unity’ – it is that the rest of the Party and its 350,000 members can have unity as long as they do what a ~~few hundred~~ couple of thousand Militant members say. That is not a definition of unity which the Party accepts. We dismiss it and despise it...We will not buckle any more than the people of courage who told the truth about Militant in Liverpool buckled to their threats. The great mass majority of the Labour Party would not and should not forgive us”.¹

New Labour victorious. As Tony Blair walked over the threshold of 10 Downing Street on the morning of Friday 2nd May 1997, few in the swollen crowd of party workers outside could really believe that the British Labour Party’s eighteen long ‘wilderness years’ in opposition had finally come to an end. Indeed, few observers of British politics would forget that day either. For some, Blair’s ‘new’ Labour party had successfully overthrown the established political order, so dominant a political force since Labour’s spectacular election defeat in 1979. For others, *New Labour* was anything but new, representing the continuation rather than the rejection of ‘the forces of conservatism’. However, few could deny the significance of the moment. If the events of Labour’s landslide victory symbolised anything, it brought into even sharper relief the sheer distance Labour had travelled on the long road to modernisation and renewal.

Much of the first decade of Labour’s wilderness years was dominated by intra-party tension between its parliamentary leaders and sections of its rank-and-file membership. This climate of dissent, largely born out of reaction to the perceived failures of Labour’s 1974-79 administration, permeated through the bedrock of the Labour Movement. Yet, crucially for the Labour Party, grassroots attitudinal dissent adopted a particularly organised form. An enduring crisis of leadership within the party encouraged the development of factions and tendencies, especially on Labour’s left-wing. The impact of election defeat and the growing vacuum in leadership allowed organised factions to

¹ Handwritten note by Neil Kinnock concerning Labour’s 1985 enquiry into the Militant Tendency; Kinnock papers, Churchill Archive Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge (ref. box 337). Reproduced with permission.

rapidly accumulate institutional and political authority as competing centres of power to parliamentary leaders. The extent of such factionalisation was so widespread that some journalists used it as a convenient explanation for Labour's election defeats in both 1983 and 1987. Equally, many election strategists agreed that for Labour to successfully challenge the Conservatives, it first had to rid itself of dissent among its own ranks. Accordingly, the ending of organised factionalism and the expulsion of those most factionalist members became vital pre-cursors for the eventual ideological and electoral re-positioning of the Labour Party itself. It was a popular belief throughout the party that a strategy of ideological revisionism could not be maintained if the balance of power continued to rest in the hands of activist members rather than Labour's parliamentary leadership. For significant minorities of party members, New Labour's eventual electoral success in 1997 came at a price. The strategy pursued by Blair and his immediate predecessors – of narrowing Labour's traditional 'broad church' to deliver ideological and electoral re-alignment – was heavily dependent on the eradication of organised dissent through the resurgence of centralised party leadership and the marginalisation of the cherished structures of collective grassroots activism.

As well as factionalism on Labour's left, there was also fragmentation and dissent on Labour's right-wing after 1979. The contribution of both can be viewed as equally traumatic for successive leaders and for the party overall. Both resulted in a haemorrhage of party members and activists. Both resulted in the subsequent formation of new party organisations (e.g. SDP, Militant Labour, Socialist Labour Party). Yet Labour leaders identified that it was organised *left-wing* dissent among grassroots activists which underpinned the party's continuing electoral unpopularity. To address this, party leaders worked systematically for the eradication of organised left-wing dissent and, hence, the expulsion of its most factionalist members. The over-riding priority was to effect Labour's long-term organisational and ideological modernisation. The principal focus of this research, therefore, is to consider the close relationship between the decline of Labour Left factionalism and the dynamics of Labour's recent transformation.

However, factionalism need not always be an *organised* expression of dissent from the majority viewpoint. Crucially, grassroots factionalism can be maintained at the *individual* level, through the holding of personal political opinions that may diverge from established leadership thinking at any given moment. Party members may be deprived of

a range of ideologically sympathetic political organisations to which they could join, but this would not *automatically* involve a consequent reduction in dissenting opinion at the individual (member) level. To test this particular aspect of party factionalism, this Thesis reports on the findings of a survey of party members conducted shortly after the 1997 election, and assesses the extent of diverging political opinion among New Labour's grassroots membership. To what extent does New Labour continue to rest on the 'shifting sands' of attitudinal dissent despite the relative lack of opportunities for organised behavioural factionalism? Is it possible for one to occur in the absence of the other?

To examine these issues further, this Introduction considers the core hypothesis and research questions underpinning the research, the key conceptual framework surrounding it, and outlines the plan for the Thesis.

1. Hypothesis and Research Questions

This Thesis considers two fundamental questions regarding the Labour Party and Labour Left factionalism in the contemporary era. First, whether the fragmentation and decline of the Labour Left during the 1979-97 period can be understood as occurring through the interplay between organisational and ideological factors at the party *and* group levels. Second, despite the apparent decline of organised Labour Left factionalism, whether the modern-day Labour Party continues to exhibit some of the characteristics of attitudinal dissent among its grassroots membership. These give rise to a number of different research questions that this Thesis intends to address.

a. Organisational and ideological factors at the party and group levels

It is widely accepted that we should understand the spectacular electoral victory of New Labour in May 1997 as strongly correlated with the past successes of party leaders in delivering comprehensive programmes of *party-level* ideological and organisational modernisation. However, it is much less widely appreciated that these momentous reforms heavily delimited the capacity of Labour Left groups to mobilise grassroots support as competing centres of power and legitimacy. Many of the underlying principles of Labour's organisational and ideological transformation were predicated on the *absence* (rather than the minimisation) of intra-party strife. It is important to consider, therefore,

whether party-level organisational and ideological transformation cultivated an environment in which it was structurally impossible for activists to express (both legitimately and collectively) their alternative priorities and viewpoints. In ideological terms, party leaders adopted a programmatic agenda that systematically abandoned many of Labour's traditional socialist-collectivist ideals in favour of a range of electorally pragmatic and revisionist policies that would, hopefully, yield eventual electoral victory. What was the form and extent of Labour's ideological transformation? How successful was ideological reform in ending the propensity for grassroots members to hold significantly radical and divergent opinions relative to party leaders and Labour voters?

Party leaders also undertook a series of structural reforms to party organisation that centralised and reasserted the authority of leadership, fundamentally altered the nature of grassroots membership, and modified the apparatus for political participation by activist supporters. As Duverger identified in the 1950s, the organisational structures of the Labour Party rendered it a salient example of his 'branch-mass' type of party. But, Labour's recent organisational transformation appeared to undermine many of the collective forms of party organisation typical of Duverger's branch-mass party. Instead, party leaders have emphasised the strategic importance of individual member empowerment, where the activities of party élites are routinely legitimised by members individually, rather than by collective caucuses of party activists. What was the form and extent of Labour's organisational transformation? Has party-level organisational transformation meant that the modern Labour Party has become less typical of the 'branch-mass' type of party organisation? To what extent does New Labour now represent an electoral-professional (Panebianco), 'catch-all' (Kirchheimer) or 'cartel' (Katz/Mair) party organisation, where the traditional pluralist and collective structures have been expropriated by individualised and 'atomistic' conceptions of grassroots membership?

Party-level organisational and ideological reforms are not the only explanations for the decline of the Labour Left during the 1980s. Specific *group-level* factors are also central to understanding the process of its decline. The Labour Left is a collection of various groups, each of which displays markedly different structural properties and ideological traits. There was no single organisational form of Labour Left factionalism, nor was there any common sense of ideological purpose. Some groups were loosely organised and were

designed to embrace a range of ideologies and programmatic objectives. Some advanced only a narrow ideological platform based on single issues and could, therefore, exert only temporary influence over the party at-large. Other groups of the Labour Left were much more tightly knit, and the organisational form they adopted together with the breadth of the ideological platform they propounded meant that, in many ways, they closely resembled mature political parties in themselves. Such variation in the organisational and ideological characteristics of Labour Left groups poses a number of key questions at the group-level. First, it is important to consider the effects of Labour's ideological transformation at the group-level. How far did the various groups of the Labour Left share the principles underlying Labour's ideological transformation? To what extent was the process of Labour Left decline exacerbated by differential responses of Labour Left groups to party-level ideological reform? Secondly, we must assess the role of group-level organisational factors in explaining the decline and fragmentation of the Labour Left. What were the underlying structural characteristics of factional organisation among Labour Left groups? What role was played by the existence of different 'types' of factional organisation in exposing the groups of the Left to fragmentation and decline?

b. Prevalence of factionalism within New Labour

It is also important to consider the contemporary prevalence of factionalism within New Labour. To talk of a party completely free from factionalism (or free from the potential for factionalism from dissent) would be to under-estimate the resurgent capabilities of grassroots members in exerting pressure on Labour's parliamentary leadership. In reporting the main findings of original survey research among party members, conducted shortly after the 1997 general election, this Thesis addresses a number of key questions concerning the expression of dissenting opinion within an organisationally and ideologically transformed Labour Party. Despite the decline of organised Labour Left factionalism during the 1980s, does the modern-day party membership continue to exhibit certain features of factionalism and, therefore, has New Labour given rise to a form of 'new factionalism'? Does there exist within New Labour an observable tension between pre-1994 and post-1994 cohorts of party members? Is it possible for attitudinal factionalism to exist among Labour's grassroots membership despite the lack of an organisational apparatus within which to pressurise party leaders and influence the direction of party policy?

To summarise, this Thesis intends to address the following research questions:

A. Ideological Factors

- What was the form and extent of party-level ideological transformation?
- Did party-level ideological transformation precipitate an observable decline in the propensity for grassroots party members to hold significantly radical and divergent opinions relative to party leaders and the Labour electorate?
- How far did the various groups of the Labour Left share the principles underlying Labour's ideological transformation?
- To what extent was the decline of the Labour Left exacerbated by a series of differential group-level responses to ideological transformation at the party-level?

B. Organisational Factors

- What was the form and extent of party-level organisational transformation?
- Has party-level organisational transformation meant that Labour has ceased to resemble Duverger's classic 'branch-mass' party? To what extent has Labour become a 'catch-all' or 'cartel' party where its traditional collective structures of participation have been undermined by individual and atomised conceptions of grassroots party membership?
- What were the underlying characteristics of factional organisation among groups of the Labour Left?
- What role was played by the existence of different forms of factional organisation in exposing the groups of the Labour Left to fragmentation and decline?

C. Factionalism and New Labour

- Does there exist within the modern Labour Party a tension between pre-1994 and post-1994 (Old Labour v. New Labour) cohorts of party members? How, and in what ways, are the attitudes of New Labour recruits different from those of longer-standing members?
- What, if any, are the prevailing patterns of factionalism within the grassroots membership of New Labour?

- Can attitudinal or ideological factionalism continue to exist among Labour's grassroots membership despite the lack of organisational structures within which to pressurise and influence party leaders?

2. Key Conceptual Framework

These research questions transcend a number of different key theoretical concepts, some of which are well versed in political science, others much less so. In assessing the key determinants of decline in Labour Left factionalism, and how this was encouraged by the organisational and ideological transformation of the Labour Party, we must appreciate various debates concerning the nature and form of political parties, as well as a number of particular theories surrounding party transformation. Below the party-level, it is also important to evaluate two central issues. First, the widely held belief that party members (relative to leaders or voters) advocate more extreme ideological positions and, consequently, display greater propensity towards factionalist behaviour. Second, how models of factional conflict within political parties allow us to distinguish between different forms of factionalism and account for varying degrees of factional coverage and influence within the wider political system.

The nature of political parties

Two authors made important early contributions to the literature surrounding the nature of modern political parties. Ostrogorski (1892) and Michels (1915) held opposing views on the true democratic functions of modern parties and, as a result, they accorded different perspectives to questions of intra-party democracy. Michels viewed the oligarchic control of top leadership groups as damaging and antithetical to the existence of mass democratic politics.² Ostrogorski regarded local activist or association control of political organisations as anathema to representative democracy.³ Powerful internal caucuses would undermine party democracy and, therefore, unduly affect the protection of parliamentary sovereignty. This fundamental debate remained one of particular historical importance for the Labour Party, the Labour Left, and ordinary party members. For many party activists, Labour can only be truly representative of its core constituency of supporters if it provides for internal democracy, and accords rights and

² Michels (1915), pp.10-11, pp.377ff

³ Ostrogorski (1892) vol. 1 esp. part III, ch.8, pp.580-618

privileges to its members in determining the policies, strategic priorities and ideological direction taken by party leaders. For party élites, internal democracy often militates against the effective management of the party organisation and, therefore, might act to disproportionately affect the long-term electability of their party. Consequently, the debate surrounding the relative merits of direct versus representative democracy – specifically Michels’ ‘iron law of oligarchy’ and Ostrogorski’s concern at the power of local caucuses of activists – assumes particular significance in the study of intra-party factionalism and dissent.

Michels’ iron law is presented as an immutable concept. Michels’ claim that there is a degree of impossibility in breaking out of his ‘iron law of oligarchy’ is essentially contestable. This poses two fundamental questions. First, to what extent is Michels’ thesis an *iron* law given that its traits may be recognisable in political parties at some times, or at some levels, but not at others? Second, to what extent can the psychological reasoning behind the oligarchic tendencies of party leaders be actually observed, and therefore quantified, or is it that Michels’ iron law is but one of a number of different means by which we can describe what is an inherently complex power relationship?

Although Michels and Ostrogorski tended to implicitly static conceptions of party, emphasising broad trends without providing for longer-term party transformation, their observations held great resonance for the Labour Party of the early-1980s. Throughout Labour’s early ‘wilderness’ years, and arguably for some years before 1979, much of the dissent and factionalism between the Left and successive party leaderships involved a number of competing perspectives on intra-party democracy. The Labour Left invariably sought to maximise leadership accountability to party conferences, whereas Labour right-wingers (including sections of its parliamentary leadership) typically sought to minimise the influence activist groups in election campaigning, candidate selection, and the determination of party policy. The saliency of this issue is highlighted by the events of two key periods. Firstly, during the 1979-83 Parliament, intra-party democracy played a central role in encouraging the ‘Gang of Four’ to cede from the party by establishing the SDP to rival Labour. Secondly, between 1983 and 1987, the Labour Left systematically opposed party leaders in their efforts to expel ‘extremist’ activists and ‘militant’ members. The Labour Left regularly contended that the expulsions were designed to have an immediate fragmenting impact in its own sphere of influence and, accordingly, mounted

public campaigns to defend members' rights against the centralisation of power by party leaders.

Since the late-1980s, the issue of intra-party democracy and leadership accountability has remained a key platform for significant minorities within the Labour Party. Groups such as the Campaign Group, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy or, more recently, the 'Grassroots Alliance', have acquired the mantle of 'champions' of party democracy. In particular, they have visibly campaigned against institutional and structural reforms, contesting that the reforms encouraged the centralising tendencies of party leaders and office-holders. While the Labour Left has attached particular importance to questions surrounding Michels' 'iron law of oligarchy', party leaders have tended to shape their perspectives towards internal party democracy much more in light of Ostrogorski's concern at the power of caucuses over the entirety of party organisation.

The different perspectives of Michels and Ostrogorski have helped to shape some of the fundamental debates surrounding the internal distribution of power within political parties, especially during the era of early democratisation. However, the typologies of party suggested by Duverger in his classic text, *Political Parties* (1954), regarded the form and structure adopted by political parties as a product of competitive forces within the wider political system.⁴ Duverger's typology of party organisation consisted of two axioms. First, a 'horizontal dimension' which differentiated between direct (unitary) and indirect (confederation) structures of party. Under Duverger's model, the form of organisation adopted by Labour typified it as 'indirect' since its origins rested with a variety of intellectuals, trade unionists, co-operative and other socialist societies. Secondly, Duverger highlighted vertical dimensions in party structure. Duverger concluded that European parties tended to be composed of four types of 'basic element' – the small and elite 'caucus', representative branch-mass parties like Labour, the workplace 'cell', and the private army or 'militia'. Whereas caucuses and branch-mass organisations prevailed in liberal democratic systems, cells and militia tended to exist only in totalitarian and authoritarian regimes.

Duverger's typology reflected much of the underlying intellectual debate surrounding the writings of Michels and Ostrogorski fifty years before. All three scholars pointed to a

⁴ Duverger (1954)

clear distinction between the caucus structure of parties in the age of early democratisation, and the prevalence of 20th century representative, mass-membership parties operating under branch and association structures. Moreover, these classic debates regarding the nature and typologies of political organisation help to inform us as to why some parties experience intra-party dissent whilst others do not. It is posited in this Thesis that Labour's recent organisational transformation characterised it as a party much less typical of Duverger's ideal-type of branch-mass structure. The individualisation of membership and alterations to Labour's prevailing democratic structures meant that Labour not only became less typical of the branch-mass party, but also that the various factions and tendencies which often flourish under branch-mass conditions could no longer mobilise as alternative centres of power. The demise of Labour as a branch-mass party necessarily involved, therefore, the decline of the Labour Left.

Transformation of parties and party systems

Political science during the post-war era has tended to concentrate less on establishing workable typologies of party or party structure and has, instead, addressed broader questions of how parties react to the development of complex and sophisticated political 'markets' within which to compete for votes. We are now able to draw on an extensive literature aiming to test (either comparatively or through a single case) a variety of hypotheses concerning party and party system transformation. This literature is of particular conceptual importance in assessing how, and in what ways, Labour's 'politics of transformation' rendered organised Left dissent irreconcilable with electoral success.

One of the most important of these contributions was Anthony Downs' *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957). Downs' hypothesis held that the distribution of voter-opinion along the prevailing continuum of political conflict (i.e. in British politics, the left-right social-class axis) determined which party would win a general election. Downs further claimed that the underlying distribution of opinion pre-determined a unique ideological positioning for each party, enabling it to maximise voter support relative to its competitors.⁵ Downs' model contended that the further a political party moved from its

⁵ Downs' model struck a particular conceptual resemblance to earlier theories of industrial location propounded by Hotelling (1929) and Smithies (1941)

own end of the prevailing continuum of conflict, towards the centre and towards other parties, the higher its vote would be.

As intuitive and plausible as Downs' model may have been, it nevertheless suffered from a number of structural problems. David Robertson observed that 'for Downs there is never any reason why a party might not want, might not be able, might not suffer from failing to adopt the vote maximising point on the spectrum'.⁶ Just as it is rational for a party to adopt such a position, it is equally rational *not* to do so. The Downsian framework failed to sufficiently incorporate actors other than voters, parties and leaders. In reality, political parties rely on a variety of actors, some inside the party (members, donors, other affiliated organisations) and others outside of it (pressure groups, external donors, media). These actors may push and pull political parties in different directions and, consequently, it is possible for parties to be pulled simultaneously both towards and away from the Downsian point of best competitive advantage at any given moment.

Because Downs limited the number of actors in his model, he also tended to view these actors as displaying an inherent homogeneity. However, parties are rarely homogenous units, at least under democratic regimes. Moreover, party leaderships often reflect the diversity in opinion prevalent inside the party, and the wider electoral battleground tends to be divided into localised parliamentary constituencies rather than existing as a single electoral unit. Therefore, for parties to adopt a true vote maximising position they would need to incorporate not only the multitude of 'other actors', but would also need to successfully identify and occupy an 'aggregated' vote maximising position, should it exist.

Third, there is no necessary correlation between a party's journey towards the point of vote-maximisation and its subsequent electoral success. General elections may not be rational events. The record of some political parties may be such that they compete in the electoral market with little real hope for victory. For these parties there is negligible short-term advantage gained from vote-maximisation. Similarly, if the electoral scene is dominated by rational parties and rational voters, then why are some parliamentary constituencies regarded as 'safe' whilst others are viewed as 'marginal'? The existence of both substantially reduces the implied universality of rational models of electoral behaviour and voter choice. Rather than parties moving towards a pre-determined vote

⁶ Robertson (1976), p.31

maximising position, the given position they adopt tends to reflect the interplay between exogenous ‘push’ and endogenous ‘pull’ factors. In short, parties will only seek to adopt a position of best competitive advantage when it is competitively *necessary* and *expedient* to do so.

Nevertheless, Downs’ hypothesis managed to inject a degree of dynamism into a body of literature that had, thus far, rested on rather static perceptions of parties and party systems. His theory implied that parties were dynamic organisations that must adapt their ideological appeal to meet the fluctuating demands of electoral markets. As Alan Ware noted, the decline of many of the traditional ‘material and solidary incentives’ involved in party recruitment and activism meant that parties became increasingly unable to control the ways in which it could ‘imbue their members with an ideology’.⁷ Modern party competition, therefore, required parties to adopt a ‘catch-all’ strategy. Otto Kirchheimer made particular mention of this phenomenon:

“the mass integration party, product of an age with harder class lines and more sharply protruding denominational structures, is transforming itself into a catch-all ‘people’s’ party. Abandoning attempts at the intellectual and moral encadrement of the masses, it is turning more fully to the electoral scene, trying to exchange effectiveness in depth for a wider audience and more immediate electoral success”.⁸

Kirchheimer’s catch-all thesis was followed by a number of other studies of party transformation. For example, Stephen Wolinetz, Peter Mair and Gordon Smith have tested the Kirchheimer thesis directly, examining both issues of methodology and case studies where catch-allism has remained largely absent or non-apparent.⁹ Others have developed alternative models. Panebianco observed that party transformation might occur less as a result of an explicit recognition of the Downsian rationality in party competition, more through a growing professionalisation in political leadership. Panebianco claimed that the gravitational shift in focus – away from rank-and-file party memberships towards the wider electorate – necessitated the professionalisation of political parties and, therefore, experts and professionals have become much more useful to party leaders than traditional party bureaucrats and activists. In place of the typical

⁷ see Ware (1996), esp. ch. 2 pp.74-78

⁸ Kirchheimer (1966)

⁹ See Wolinetz (1989); Smith, (1989); Mair (1989)

branch-mass or caucus organisation, Panebianco argues, emerges the 'electoralist-professional' party.¹⁰

However, the research of Richard Katz and Peter Mair stressed that the forms of party organisation and electoral competition are much more complex than many of these models accounted for. They asserted that party transformation is determined less by movement along a continuum of electoralism, more by taking into account the wide variety of financial and other resources available to political parties. For transformation to occur, parties must be prepared to substitute traditional resources for alternatives. The growth in state funding of political parties, or at least the growing centrality of political parties to the functioning of the state machine, has meant that parties have been increasingly able to substitute traditional resources for those of the state. Whereas for Panebianco, party transformation involved the development of electoral-professional parties, the outcome for Katz and Mair of an emergent relationship between the state and parties (as agents of the state) encouraged the development of 'cartel' parties instead.¹¹ In British politics, the absence of state funding and the continued reliance of established parties on traditional corporate, trade union, or member/supporter donations has meant that, as a single case, it provided little substantive weight in support of the cartelisation thesis. However, Katz and Mair's research is useful for drawing our attention to an emerging phenomenon whereby parties are regarded less as truly representative institutions and more as permanent fixtures or 'agents' within the wider state-political superstructure.

Party stratification and attitudinal asymmetry

Political scientists concerned with the study of parties have regularly visited the proposition that party unity and electoral performance is affected by the degree of attitudinal congruence on substantive ideological and policy issues. Ostrogorski observed that the power of caucuses of local activists in the 19th century Liberal Party caused its elite to become alienated from voter-opinion. Ostrogorski noted that 'it is almost general fact that the [local caucus] is more radical...than the mass of the party, more so even than the MP who has to submit to its demands'.¹² The result of such division was

¹⁰ Panebianco (1988)

¹¹ Katz and Mair (1995)

¹² *ibid.*, pt. III, ch. 8, p.596

invariably electoral defeat.¹³ The lack of congruence between all sections of the party and the inflexibility of local caucuses in their 'virtuous ardour' caused parties not to 'make sufficient allowance for national idiosyncrasies' and in doing so, 'they alienate a number of voters'.¹⁴

Contemporary scholars have also observed elements of attitudinal asymmetry within political parties. David Butler pointed to the existence of a strategic dilemma for party leaders in that their 'most loyal and devoted followers tend to have more extreme views...and [are] still farther removed from the mass of those who actually provide the vote'.¹⁵ V.O. Key suggested that in campaigning for office, it had become a key priority for party leaders in the United States to 'try to restrain the extremists within the party ranks'.¹⁶ Similarly, Duverger observed among European parties that there existed a significant degree of asymmetry between leaders, activists and voters. Duverger concluded that highly publicised conflicts between European party leaders and activists coincided with much wider ideological disparities between party activists and the ordinary voting public.¹⁷

John May subsequently produced one of the most detailed and systematic analyses of hierarchical contrasts in ideological opinion within political parties.¹⁸ May's *Special Law of Curvilinear Disparity* reflected the established hypothesis that within political parties there existed an observable disaggregation between the moderate opinions of leaders and voters on the one hand, and the relative militancy and extremism of party activists on the other. May highlighted the presence of three key uniformities. Firstly, that the opinions of party leaders and non-leaders (voters and non-active supporters) were broadly congruent with each other. Secondly, that sub-leaders (activist members and supporters) were 'substantive extremists' relative to leaders and voters, and were 'most estranged from public opinion at large'. Finally and consequentially, leaders occupied an intermediate (or pragmatic) positioning between the median opinions of activists and party voters.

¹³ for a discussion of division in the Liberal party after 1886 see Ostrogorski (1892), pt II, ch. 9, pp.287-391

¹⁴ *ibid.*, pt. III, ch. 7, p.566

¹⁵ Butler (1960), p.3

¹⁶ Key (1958), p.241

¹⁷ Duverger (1954), pp.187ff

¹⁸ May (1973)

May posited that the general propositions of his Law of Curvilinear Disparity were apparent in a range of empirical survey-based studies. May reported on a number of previous studies, the conclusions of which reinforced the notion of attitudinal asymmetry between different party strata. Janosik's study of Labour branch parties demonstrated that local party officers displayed a propensity towards extreme attitudinal positions relative to their incumbent MPs.¹⁹ Epstein found that local Labour party activists tended to discriminate between different types of parliamentary 'maverick'. Epstein contended that party activists, whilst appearing to indulge and sanction breaches of leadership discipline by left-wing MPs, more actively punished moderate right-wing MPs for dissenting behaviour.²⁰ Moreover, in studies of the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States, McClosky found that convention delegates held substantially more extreme attitudinal positions than American voters at-large.²¹ Similarly, Constantini and Eldersveld observed that sub-leaders and activists in California and Michigan continued to hold the strongest and most extreme attitudinal positions relative to party leaders and local electors.²²

What are the underlying causes of attitudinal asymmetry? May suggested a number of different variables which might explain why activists and sub-leaders hold extreme attitudinal positions relative to leaders and voters. First, curvilinear disparity may reflect prevailing patterns of intra-party accountability, namely that the extent of scrutiny of top leaders by non-leaders allows activists and sub-leaders to deviate more readily from the median position of the electorate. Second, unlike other state organisations such as civil bureaucracies or the armed forces, political parties display elements of Weberian free recruitment where there exist few active controls on membership and recruitment. As May remarked, 'it is easy to join a party's local branch [and] the rules governing eligibility to join such units are scarcely more restrictive than the rules governing eligibility to vote in a general election'. This allows the recruitment of extremists and radicals into party membership to proceed relatively unchecked. Third, the extent of political socialisation among party leaders (and the relative lack of it among ordinary voters) may explain why, relative to activists and sub-leaders, they continue to hold more moderate attitudinal positions. Whereas leadership encourages ideological moderation, primarily to ensure

¹⁹ Janosik (1968), especially ch. 2

²⁰ Epstein (1967)

²¹ McClosky *et al.* (1960)

²² See Constantini (1963); and Eldersveld (1964), especially ch. 8

electoral advantage, the voluntarism of party membership 'ensures that they attract zealots in the party cause'. May claimed that it was only the most devout activists who appeared willing to engage in the mundane routinised political activities associated with campaigning and elections. The centrality of these three variables in the functioning of modern-day political parties suggests that there may be an inherent tendency towards curvilinear disparity and, therefore, the concomitant extremism of activists relative to leaders and electors.

May's suggestion that patterns of curvilinear disparity may be readily observed in modern political parties provided a number of platforms from which to question the implied universality of his Special Law. In particular, curvilinear disparity cannot account for changing relationships between different party strata over time. May suggested that the relative extremism of activists militates against the electoralist predisposition of party leaders and, consequently, that active grassroots supporters cannot hope to influence the strategic reasoning of party leaders. However, in reality, we find that activists can acquire added influence over leaders, especially during times of weakened electoral competitiveness. The growth in influence of the Labour Left during the late-1970s and early-1980s may be explained, in part, by the decline in the Labour's electoral competitiveness during its 1974-79 administration. As Kitschelt observed,

"...it is not a generic psychological and structural clash between leaders and activists but Labour's failed incomes policies in the 1960s and 1970s and the gradual decline of British industry, accompanied by a temporary resurgence of class conflict...that fuelled radical unrest in the party, and facilitated by a loosely coupled party structure, enabled a new coalition of radicals and trade unionists to assert themselves and eventually force many pragmatists to abandon the party".²³

A key criticism of the model of curvilinear disparity, therefore, is that it cannot explain temporal variations in the leader-activist relationship. The strategies of party leaders may change over time and, as a consequence, sub-leaders and activists may make an impact on some occasions and for some periods, but not others.

May also failed to address Duverger's criticism that the concepts of party 'activist' and 'militancy' remained vague and ill-defined terms. The model of curvilinear disparity did not take account of differences in party activism, and a number of later studies found

²³ Kitschelt (1989), p.421

substantive attitudinal disparities between different types of activist.²⁴ As Kitschelt remarked, these surveys 'have shown that grass-roots party activists are generally more moderate than "middle-level" activists holding [local] party executive functions or participating in national party conferences'.²⁵ Moreover, party activism *per se* does not imply militancy. The undeniable extent of some activists' political sophistication may make them as susceptible as their leaders to the Downsian 'logic' of electoralism in party competition. As Norris found in her 1995 study of May's Law, the presence of differential incentives in explaining patterns of support for political parties may explain why activist members are not inherently pre-destined to occupy extreme positions relative to leaders or voters. Therefore, it should not be assumed that party activists are necessarily incapable of locating themselves in close ideological proximity to the average mainstream voter.

"Leaders, sub-leaders and non-leaders may become involved in party politics due to a host of mixed incentives, drawn by personal ambition, material rewards, sociability, civic-mindedness or group membership. To assume one dominant incentive for any strata seems unduly simplistic...pragmatists and ideologues, radicals and moderates...may be expected at every level of the party".²⁶

Finally, the model of curvilinear disparity assumed a degree of permanency in the divide between leaders and voters on the one hand, and activists on the other. This suggested that activists inevitably experience the frustration of their political aspirations by party leaders keen on maintaining an electoralist relationship with the voting public. On a purely rational level, therefore, the presence of curvilinear disparity and free recruitment into parties should encourage cohorts of frustrated party activists to renounce their affiliation in search of an alternative. However, in practice, this rarely occurs. The functioning of modern organisations, including parties and voluntary associations, suggests that leaders have at their disposal a variety of overt and covert resources to ensure the compliance of their memberships. The dilemma for party leaders is how to balance the 'see-saw' between encouraging legitimate activist participation and decision-making so as to prevent disaffiliation, whilst simultaneously maximising electoral competitiveness by containing extremism and restricting shift from the median position of the ordinary voter.

²⁴ See Whiteley (1983), p.44; Searing (1986)

²⁵ Kitschelt (1989), pp.404-5

²⁶ Norris (1995), p.36

Party politics and factionalism

The term 'faction' is used to describe the existence of an identifiable sub-group of individuals that, in some way, differs or deviates from mainstream behaviour or attitudes. The usage of the term is particularly applied to the study of politics. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defined a faction to be a 'self interested, turbulent, or unscrupulous party or group, especially in politics'; and the term 'factionalism' refers to the tendency towards factional group development and factional behaviour. It is particularly common to blame factions for disputes within our political societies, and in our normal lexicon the term 'faction' describes controversial groups in civil wars, national parliaments and congresses, or in local and national politics. But there is also a non-political usage for the term. For example, we recognise the existence of 'factions' within corporate affairs, the Church and religion, social networks, and even within extended families. However, it is within the realm of political conflict and competition that discussions of factionalism are most common.

Political scientists have afforded particular attention to the study of party organisation. The same cannot be said of the study of factions and factionalism as distinctive political units. Nonetheless, some studies have revealed the existence of a number of different factional groups operating within political parties. Whether that role has been significant, or not, depends on the individual party being examined and the party system in which it operates.

Within the faction literature there is considerable variation in method and focus. Some authors have concentrated on the role of factions as individual political units, assessing the extent of factional *visibility* and *legitimacy* within wider political society. Others have been particularly concerned with factions at the *system* level. They have identified different forms of factionalism, the existence of typologies of factional organisation, and various kinds of factional behaviour. Finally, other commentators have focused upon the underlying *causation* behind factionalism, stressing the importance of a variety of factors in understanding the emergence of factional groupings and the tendency towards factionalism.

Political parties, party organisations and pressure groups have received extensive scholastic attention for the simple reason that they are much more immediately

observable and visible than factions. However, commentators have tended to conflate such visibility with an assumption that parties and pressure groups perform more valid and legitimate functions than factional groups. Parties and pressure groups are regarded as vital elements essential in the smooth running of modern political systems.²⁷ These organisations are an enduring feature of day-to-day political and social life. Conversely, factions are seen to be radically divisive and clandestine groupings that perpetuate divergence from mainstream opinion, and undermine the unity of political parties and the legitimacy of party élites. But, like factions today, early voluntary and labour-oriented pressure groups were also viewed as illegitimate organisations. During the nineteenth century many doubted their true worth within political society. As Eldersveld noted, 'they were considered...as engaged in questionable goals. They were not considered as sanctioned by the community nor as having a legitimate regime status'.²⁸ Yet, in modern political life, pressure groups and trade unions have acquired their own legitimacy. These groups and associations have been legitimised by their inclusion in the context of wider political decision-making systems and, thus, they have become valuable objects for empirical study.

Factions have never acquired such legitimacy over time. As Lasswell noted in his entry in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, factions have been an 'opprobrious epithet since Roman days' and terms like 'faction' and 'factionalism' continue to evoke suspicion and denote political illegitimacy.²⁹ In party-based research, references to factions imply a number of negative connotations, including party or party system weakness, the destruction of élite unity, the existence of financial and political corruption, and as vehicles for the expression of political opportunism by party leaders. Moreover, factions are often viewed as temporary phenomena, as impermanent aberrations or 'blots' on the political landscape. But commentators often ignore some of the positive aspects of factions. For instance, factional groups may serve to unify otherwise divided political organisations. They may contribute to the overall structuring of political systems, élite(s), or voting electorates into more efficiently organised units. Just as parties may be central to the functioning of political systems, factions can also order and structure political society through the existence of their own identifiable 'faction systems'.

²⁷ Political parties have not always been seen as legitimate. During the eighteenth century there was widespread hostility towards partisan groups, such that James Madison in *Federalist No. 10* and George Washington in his Farewell Address warned of the 'evils' of creeping partisanship. See also Ranney (1975)

²⁸ Eldersveld in Ehrmann (1958), p.183

²⁹ Lasswell (1931), section 6:51

A small number of academic investigations have attempted to introduce faction study into the body of political science literature. For example, social anthropologists have suggested that factions assist in the structuring of conflict within small peasant communities in markedly different ways to traditional forms of political organisation and, in this respect, factional leaders ('patrons') have engaged in alternative political relationships with their followers ('clients').³⁰ V.O. Key was one of the first political scientists to seriously attempt a contribution to faction study. Key used factions and factionalism to describe the prevalence of intra-party rivalries in US states dominated by one-party politics, such that factionalism had become the only true form of political competition. Yet Key was essentially a faction pessimist. Much of his study was concerned with the impact of factions on democracy. Key identified that in some states democratic inter-party competition had been undermined by the existence of intra-party factions that replicated the functions of fully-fledged political parties.³¹ As Allan Sindler concluded, bi-factional rivalry within a single party could approximate a two-party system in itself.³²

Much of the literature on factions and factionalism has tended to avoid comparative analysis. Belloni and Beller were the only scholars to undertake a study of factionalism in an international perspective, but even their study remained essentially an edited collection of national analyses.³³ Duverger's work on modern European parties made only passing reference to factions. Similarly, Zariski's study of factionalism posited a number of important structural aspects of factions (organisation and durability), the social-psychological characteristics of faction members (cognition), and the context in which factions operated (faction systems). But Zariski's study concentrated on only a few comparative cases, notably the United States and those factionalised societies of Western Europe such as France under the Fourth Republic or Italy under the Christian Democrats.³⁴

Nevertheless, some of the national studies suggested important lines of enquiry, especially concerning the apparent variation in factional organisation. For example, William Chambers' historical study of the origins of factionalism in American politics

³⁰ Foster (1967)

³¹ Key (1952)

³² Sindler (1955)

³³ Belloni and Beller (1976)

³⁴ Zariski (1960); see also Zariski (1978)

explored the notion that factions acted as organisational 'preparatories' for fully-fledged political parties. Chambers' central contention was that American parties had been born out of factional groupings, since factions were essentially 'proto-parties' designed to encourage the growth of more mature political organisations.³⁵ Richard Rose's study of British political parties revealed a typology of factionalism that distinguished between 'faction', 'tendency' and 'ad-hoc' groupings. The key differences between Rose's ideal-types concerned variation in organisational solidity, ideological cohesion, durability and coverage.³⁶ Rose's hypothesis was reinforced by Joseph Nyomarky's study of the early German Nazi party where he identified the co-existence of highly and loosely organised forms of factionalism exerting simultaneous pressure on Nazi party élites.³⁷ However, what is clear from the literature is that there is no universal agreement as to what constitutes a faction and what constitutes an entirely different entity. Some authors, such as Key and Chambers, essentially compared factions with political parties. Others commentators, such as Rose and Nyomarky, observed that factional groups displayed clearly delineated structural properties of their own. Consequently, some of the factions described, for example by Key, would be regarded by Rose as political tendencies, whereas some of the factions identified by Rose would be described by Chambers as more akin to political parties.

The existence of typologies of factional organisation has lent particular weight to the study of factional groups as part of wider *faction systems*. For example, Norman Nicholson expanded upon Zariski's research by asserting that factions engaged in a style of politics quite distinct from that typified by parties. Nicholson observed the existence of three fundamental types of faction system within political society. First, 'homogenous factionalism' observable in small settlements, villages and communities. Second, 'poly-communal factionalism' within national or regional organisations, especially political parties with large mass memberships. Finally, a form of 'hierarchical factionalism' prevalent inside highly centralised structures at the national level, such as governments, state bureaucracies, or party leaderships.³⁸ Faction studies have also identified key differences in the motivational and behavioural factors underlying factional development. For instance, Rose observed that some factions emerged out of self-conscious behaviour

³⁵ Chambers (1963); see also Bailey (1952) for a historical analysis expanding upon the concept of 'proto-party' in British politics.

³⁶ Rose (1964)

³⁷ Nyomarky (1965)

³⁸ Nicholson (1972)

by faction activists, encouraging the development of clear ideological principles to which faction adherents pledged allegiance. Zariski further contended that there were four types of motivational factors underlying factional development - shared values, shared strategies, socio-economic affinities and personal loyalties.

Although the faction systems literature identified different forms of factional organisation and variation in the motivations for factional group development, it also advanced our understanding of faction *causation*. For instance, Ralph Nicholas suggested that the emergence of factional groups was only conducive where political society was weak, or subject to regular fluctuation and change. Hence, for Nicholas, regime illegitimacy and institutional breakdown explained the propensity for factionalised responses to political conflict.³⁹ V.O. Key suggested that the prevailing characteristics of party systems determined the extent of factionalism. Key concluded that political societies with relatively high levels of inter-party competition would be much less likely to witness the emergence of factional groups, whereas in systems dominated by a single party many of the conditions necessary for factional group development would exist. Therefore, for both Nicholas and Key, the essential characteristics of the political system strongly pre-determined the prevalence of factionalism within political society.

Zariski further suggested that proportional electoral systems encouraged the development of factional groups, and in this respect he reinforced the popular notion that two-party systems encouraged bi-factionalism, whereas in multi-party systems multi-factionalism would predominate.⁴⁰ Zariski also concurred with Duverger's view that the prevalence of factionalism was inter-connected with the level of discipline exerted within political parties – a loosely organised and weakly disciplined party would encourage the development of factions based around cliques and reinforced by a series of inter-personal relationships and affinities. Nyomarky's key contention, however, was that the propensity towards factionalism might be explained less by the properties of political systems, more by the political legitimacy of the 'host party' within which factional groups are organised.

³⁹ Nicholas (1965, 1966)

⁴⁰ Zariski (1978), pp.24-6

The prevalence of factionalism is regularly associated with the stifling of free political expression within wider political society, especially where a single political party predominates. However, where commentators such as Key suggested that the replacement of inter-party competition with rivalries between dominant parties and factional groups is democratically unsatisfactory, others such as Kothari implied that factional competition might serve as a legitimate alternative in political systems dominated by one party. Rajni Kothari's work concentrated on the Indian Congress Party, although other authors appeared to concur with his viewpoint. Whilst faction politics should not necessarily be seen as a substitute for democratic party politics, it can be legitimised by encouraging greater levels of political competition than would have otherwise been expected had the dominant party contained no internal factions.⁴¹ As Nicholas identified, factionalism was one of the best means by which political conflict could be structured, particularly in the context of system or regime transformation. Factional groups, Kothari asserted, appeared to be much more adaptive to regime transformation and social change than the more corporate forms of conflict management typified by political parties.

In short, the concepts of 'faction' and 'factionalism' have often been overlooked as important subjects of enquiry within political science and party-based research. This is highlighted by the existence of varied usage of terminology, differing conceptions of the legitimacy and function of factions, and disagreements as to the causes of factionalism. It is imperative that we appreciate the existence of a wide variety of factional organisations in modern political society, and the importance of different explanations for faction causation. Furthermore, it is important that faction research differentiates between factional groups in terms of their durability, organisation, ideology, interaction with 'host' parties, and the subjective reasoning behind factional adherence. The study of factions and factionalism can provide an invaluable means by which to understand how, and why, parties operate in the ways in which they do. The regular exclusion of faction analysis within party and party systems literatures only serves to methodologically undermine it within the wider context of political science.

⁴¹ Kothari (1964); Kothari (1970), especially chs. 5, 8

3. Plan of the Thesis

To explore these issues, this Thesis is divided into *four* distinct parts. The first section, of which this chapter is part, frames the contextual background by introducing a range of theoretical, historical and methodological issues underpinning the research design. **Chapter 2** surveys the historical context in which left-wing factionalism occurred within the Labour Party during the post-1979 era. The first part of this chapter considers how Labour overcame three important interlocking crises, and suggests that Labour's eighteen 'Wilderness Years' in opposition are best characterised as being composed of three distinct phases of crisis and decline, modernisation and renewal, and consolidation under New Labour. The second part of this chapter briefly reviews the historical context of the Labour Left during the 1979-97 period, highlighting the key events surrounding its ascendancy and subsequent decline, and exploring many of the important definitions and terms used in the study of the Labour Left.

The second section of the Thesis examines the importance of *ideological* variables in understanding the dynamics of the inter-relationship between the Labour Party and the Labour Left during the 1980s and 1990s. **Chapter 3** considers the far-reaching consequences of party-level ideological transformation. This chapter assesses the extent of Labour's programmatic shift away from the traditional socialist-collectivist ideals endorsed by the Labour Left during the early-1980s, to the electorally pragmatic and revisionist programme adopted by Labour leaders after the 1983 defeat. The principal intention behind this chapter is to consider the importance of the changing characteristics of Labour's ideological 'playing field' to which the various groups of the Labour Left aligned themselves. Furthermore, by re-analysing material from the British Election Study survey series, this chapter also considers the extent to which party-level ideological transformation successfully eradicated the tendencies of membership extremism characteristic of May's law of curvilinear disparity. **Chapter 4** examines the response of key Labour Left groups to party-level ideological transformation. By examining the policy platforms of the soft-left, hard-left and extreme-left communities, and how they changed (if at all) over time, we can consider whether the systematic temperance of party policy after 1983 had a fragmenting or unifying effect on the groups of the Left. Was the Policy Review met with universal group-level hostility, or was

Labour's ideological transformation reinforced by some constituent elements of the Labour Left, but not others?

The third section of the Thesis considers the role of *organisational* indicators in determining the inter-relationships between the Labour Party and the Labour Left after 1979. **Chapter 5** assesses the consequences of Labour's organisational transformation. By reviewing the explanatory power of classic and contemporary theories of party organisation in light of recent reforms, it is posited that the Labour Party ceased to be typical of Duverger's branch-mass form of organisation. The structuring of New Labour has become more synonymous with Downsian catch-all and electoral-professional models. The creation of an organisational context, in which the centrality of leadership power prevailed over traditional representative structures for grassroots activist participation, played a crucial part in removing the structural means for the expression of alternative left-wing ideological priorities. **Chapter 6** considers the utility of faction organisation models, especially the approach taken by Richard Rose, in understanding group-level organisational characteristics and the importance of faction structure in explaining the decline of the Labour Left. This chapter contends that the contemporary Labour Party has contained *all* three types of faction organisation suggested by Rose. It is further suggested that the apparent historical trends of Labour Left factionalism revealed the growth of 'structured factionalism' during the early-1980s over the amorphous parliamentary-based or temporary issue-specific groups typical of the 1960s and 1970s. In a transformed party, where the organisational balance of power had been settled irreconcilably against activists and grassroots members, the ability of leaders to challenge and expel the forces of organised structured factionalism became unrivalled. The causation of decline of the Labour Left, therefore, owed much to group-level organisational factors and the apparent structural trends shown by them over time.

The final section of the Thesis considers the extent to which a new, individually enfranchised membership retained some of the basic elements of factionalism, both in terms of members' objective behaviour and in their subjective attitudes and beliefs. **Chapter 7** introduces detailed data analysis from original survey research among the party's grassroots membership, conducted shortly after the 1997 general election. In addition to a brief review of survey methodology and case selection strategy, this chapter considers two key questions – the extent to which membership characteristics varied

between constituency and locality, and whether or not 'New Labour' members may be considered as qualitatively different from their 'Old Labour' counterparts. **Chapter 8** is devoted to an examination of important distinctions between behavioural and attitudinal factionalism among party members. This chapter assesses whether subjective attitudinal factionalism can exist in a party in which there are little, or no, structural opportunities for objective behavioural expressions of dissenting opinion.

Chapter 9 draws together the principal findings from these chapters and reflects on their implications for the main themes explored in this Thesis. This chapter considers the overall trends in the relationship between the Labour Party and the Labour Left during the post-1979 period, and the impact of Labour's transformation on those various groups operating and organising in its left-wing orbit. It also evaluates whether there are plausible grounds for concluding that the factionalism which so affected Labour during this period has been replaced by a 'silent' attitudinal factionalism, where grassroots members continue to express dissenting opinion albeit outside the strict organisational confines of groups, factions and tendencies.

2

Studying Labour and its Left

“Today on the eve of a new millennium, the British people have ushered in this new era of politics, and the great thing about it is that we have won support in this election from all walks of life, from all classes of people, from every single corner of our country. We are now today the People’s Party”.¹

New Labour, new beginning. The spectacular victory of Blair’s New Labour in May 1997 was the climactic culmination of Labour’s eighteen long years in the electoral wilderness. The scale of New Labour’s landslide victory showed the extent to which the voting public now recognised a ‘new’ political order with which they could entrust the reins of government. But Labour’s electoral triumph that year was also widely understood to have involved the symbolic rejection of two ‘old’ political orders of the 1980s – the Thatcherite philosophy of the Conservative New Right and the traditional socialist orthodoxy of the Labour Left. In practice, however, these should be treated as unfounded speculations. First, there was little substantive newness in New Labour since much of the heavy ‘spadework’ had been undertaken prior to Blair’s election as party leader. Second, by reasserting the pre-eminence of social democratic revisionism, the ideological transformation of the Labour Party during the 1980s and 1990s borrowed many of the theoretical precepts of Thatcherism. Third, the disintegration of the Labour Left had occurred long before the 1997 general election and, in fact, substantially predated the creation of New Labour itself. When examining the period as a whole, the historical pattern of Labour Left decline appeared to be correlated with the broad trends in transformation at the party level – the decline in one should be understood largely as a function of revival in the other. How should we understand and contextualise this important period in Labour’s recent political history?

¹ Tony Blair quoted in Cathcart (1997), p.170

This chapter is designed to set the historical background behind this thesis. First, it briefly reviews the historical context of Labour's 'wilderness years' in opposition between 1979 and 1997. The pervasive extent of three significant interlocking crises of ideology, electability, organisation and membership are examined, and how Labour subsequently overcame them through comprehensive programmes for modernisation and reform. It is further postulated that Labour's wilderness years are best understood as being composed of three distinct phases, where its early years of crisis were followed by identifiable periods of transformation and consolidation.

Second, this chapter briefly reflects on some of the key historical events behind the ascendancy and decline of the Labour Left after 1979, and suggests that its rise and fall reflected the prevailing pattern of crisis and revival at the party-level during this period. This section also examines various definitional issues involved in the study of contemporary left-wing factionalism in the Labour Party and, in doing so, suggests the existence of qualitatively different types of Labour Left.

Labour's 'wilderness years' in historical perspective

In examining the inter-relationships between the Labour Party and the Labour Left, this thesis adopts as its time frame the period between the 1979 and 1997 general elections – the two recent realigning elections of our age. The eighteen years between the defeat of the Callaghan government in May 1979 and the remarkable victory of Tony Blair and New Labour in May 1997 was the longest period of electoral isolation endured by either of the major parties since the 1920s. Some observers of Labour during this period regarded the 1979-97 era as Labour's long 'Wilderness Years'.

Since the party's bitter divisions of the early 1980s the strategy of the party's leaders has been to gain power by moving to the centre ground...For a generation, Labour politicians have spent their careers in opposition, they've seen Britain transformed by a powerful and radical Conservative leader. They have never tasted the fruits of power and their political legacy will be a party which has rejected almost everything it stood for when, sixteen years ago, it was cast into the wilderness".²

But should the entire period *really* be typified as Labour's wilderness years? To assume so would be regard the 1979-97 era as one of inexorable decline where Labour, at no point,

² Fine Art Productions for BBC Television (1995), transcript for programme 4, p.55

had any hope of assuming the offices of government. Instead, we should view the period as one of *decline* followed by *renewal* and *consolidation*. It is certainly true that in 1979 Labour was forced to confront three interlocking crises, and that these continued to permeate all levels of the party throughout the subsequent four years.³ But Labour's 'triple crises' did not characterise the remainder of its years in opposition. There is considerable debate as to the exact point of origin of Labour's renewal. It certainly had begun by 1987. In fact, some would locate the point of origin of Labour's renewal at its 1985 annual conference, or even as early as 1983.⁴ The most extensive and exhaustive period of renewal and modernisation took place between 1985 and 1992. The 'birth' of New Labour should be seen as a symbolic embodiment and consolidation of those reforms undertaken by Kinnock rather than the creation of an entirely new political entity founded on alternative conceptions of modernisation and renewal. Blair's new model Labour Party may have made significant ideological and organisational departures in its own right, but the roots of its eventual landslide victory were firmly anchored in the period of renewal which preceded it. Although we must appreciate that historical generalisations tend to encourage the use of arbitrary time frames, we might suggest that Labour's eighteen years of electoral isolation were composed of three distinctive epochs:

- Crisis and Decline (1979-1985)
- Modernisation and Renewal (1985-1992)
- Consolidation under New Labour (1992-97)

The first phase of Labour's Wilderness Years was dominated by the existence of three interlocking crises of ideology, organisation and membership, and electoral performance. Labour's election defeat in 1979 highlighted that the party had begun to experience the disintegration of its primary *ideological* discourse, which traditionally combined Keynesian economics, the mixed economy, social democratic welfarism, and neo-corporatist decision-making. The perceived failures of the defeated Labour government encouraged the adoption of an especially radical left-wing programme to rival the moderate parameters of Labour's accepted ideological base. This programme was notable in three respects. First, it awarded particular emphases to socialist economic planning, nationalisation, and economic reflation led by an expanded public sector. Second, it stressed the importance of import and exchange controls to protect the domestic

³ Whiteley (1983)

⁴ see Lent (1997) and Heffernan (1998)

economy from the vagaries of global capitalism. Third, it evoked an isolationist conception of foreign affairs by advancing the case for British withdrawal from the European Community, alongside non-nuclear defence policies that, in effect, implied eventual British retreat from NATO as well. Although the Labour Left was successful in ensuring that these key ideological tenets found their way into Labour's 1983 manifesto, they were built upon unfounded confidence in its own programme to galvanise mass voter opinion. The extent of the electorate's rejection of Labour in 1983 undermined both the Labour Left and the ideological principles it advanced. Moreover, the result brought into particularly sharp relief the pervasive extent of Labour's ideological crisis.

The second important crisis to engulf the Labour Party following its 1979 defeat involved the breakdown of the established supremacy of parliamentary leadership over the institutions of party *organisation*. Traditionally, the organisational structures of the Labour Party pluralistically distributed a range of decision-making powers to a number of different 'actors' – the leadership, the front-bench (or Shadow Cabinet), the National Executive Committee, and to grassroots activists and trade unionists at the Party's annual conference. These organisational traits rendered the Labour Party as a particularly salient example of Duverger's ideal-type of branch-mass party. In reality, however, the radicalism of the 'mass' of the party's grassroots was systematically tempered by the moderate and electoralist pragmatism of party leaders through the maintenance of consistent right-wing majorities inside all the major institutions of party organisation. But these counterbalanced organisational forces slowly disintegrated during the 1970s as the Left gradually assumed majority positions on the NEC. The effect of the Left's ascendancy was to reinforce a growing movement inside the party for structural reform to make leaders and parliamentarians accountable to grassroots activists, and to prioritise the programmatic choices of rank-and-file members over the perceivably discredited policy options pursued by successive party leaders in government. Although the Labour Left were temporarily successful in asserting their own organisational and ideological preferences, the continuing presence of a cohesive right-wing bloc within the parliamentary party and among some trade union leaders, perpetuated a climate of resistance and internal strife. The on-going battles between the left and right of the party polarised all sections of it, and in doing so destroyed the authority and legitimacy of party leadership.

Year	Individual Membership	Trade Union Membership	Societies' Membership	Total Party Membership
1945	487,000	2,510,000	41,000	3,059,000
1951	876,000	4,937,000	35,000	5,849,000
1955	843,000	5,606,000	35,000	6,484,000
1959	848,000	5,564,000	25,000	6,437,000
1964	830,000	5,502,000	21,000	6,353,000
1970	680,000	5,519,000	24,000	6,223,000
1974	692,000	5,787,000	39,000	6,518,000
1979	666,000	6,511,000	58,000	7,236,000
1980	348,000	6,407,000	56,000	6,811,000
1981	277,000	6,273,000	58,000	6,608,000
1982	274,000	6,185,000	57,000	6,516,000
1983	295,000	6,101,000	59,000	6,456,000
1984	323,000	5,844,000	60,000	6,227,000
1985	313,000	5,827,000	60,000	6,200,000
1986	297,000	5,778,000	58,000	6,133,000
1987	289,000	5,564,000	55,000	5,908,000
1988	266,000	5,481,000	56,000	5,804,000
1989	294,000	5,335,000	53,000	5,682,000
1990	311,000	4,922,000	54,000	5,287,000
1991	261,000	4,811,000	54,000	5,126,000
1992	280,000	4,634,000	51,000	4,965,000
1993	266,000			
1994	305,000			
1995	365,000			
1996	400,000			
1997	401,000			

Table 1: Membership of the Labour Party 1945-97

*Sources: Reports of the National Executive Committee;
Butler and Butler (2000), p. 159*

The gradual erosion of Labour's mass membership of grassroots activists in the constituencies and the trade unions further exacerbated its crisis of governance. As Table 1 above highlights, individual membership of the party rose considerably during the Attlee governments between 1945 and 1951. Thereafter, individual membership declined consistently, such that by 1970 Labour had lost almost one-quarter of its individual membership during the previous twenty years. In practice, the decline in individual membership was masked by the recruitment of trade unionists.⁵ The 1979 election defeat, however, was an important watershed in party membership. Within twelve months of defeat, individual membership had fallen by almost one-half to 348,000, and declined by a further twenty percent in the following year. In 1981, individual membership was less than one-third of that thirty years before. Also the emergence of mass unemployment particularly within the heavily unionised primary and manufacturing sectors meant that, for the first time, Labour's trade union membership had also begun to contract. Between 1979 and 1983, Labour lost almost one million members.

⁵ The unusually high minimum affiliation level (1,000 members per constituency) used by Labour Party headquarters between 1957 and 1980 means that it is not possible to confirm the membership data for these years. Therefore, we should not over-estimate membership decline during this period. See Seyd (1987), p. 40.

Labour’s defeat in May 1979 was a spectacular one. The election heralded the birth of Thatcherism, which became the most powerful and, for some, the most socially destructive of political ideologies in the post-war era. Labour’s defeat was precipitated by the dramatic proceedings of the House of Commons on 28th March 1979 during the only successful vote of government no-confidence to occur in the 20th century.⁶ More importantly, the 1979 defeat was the third consecutive occasion on which Labour had failed to secure more than forty percent of the vote.

	1979	1983	1987	1992	1997
Conservative	43.9	42.4	43.4	42.3	30.7
Labour	36.9	27.6	31.7	35.2	43.2
LibDem ⁷	13.8	25.4	23.2	18.3	16.8
SNP	1.6	1.1	1.3	1.9	2.0
PC	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.5
Other	3.3	3.1	2.6	3.5	6.8
Turnout	76.0	72.7	75.3	77.7	71.4
Swing ⁸	+5.2	+4.0	-1.7	-2.0	-10.0
Majority (<i>seats</i>)	Con 43	Con 144	Con 102	Con 21	Lab 179

Table 2: General Election Results 1979-97
(all figures are percentages)

The third interlocking crisis for Labour was, therefore, an *electoral* one. Many left-wing grassroots activists apportioned blame for defeat in the failures of party leaders during the 1964-70 and 1974-79 Labour administrations to implement a significantly radical programme for full employment and increased public services. The Labour Left contended that only the radicalisation of party policy could effectively challenge the emergence of partisan de-alignment and the class-cutting appeal of Thatcherism. In driving through its socialist agenda, the Left effected important organisational changes limiting the autonomy of party leaders in determining Labour’s electoral priorities. The immediate effects of structural reforms and the radicalisation of policy fractured the party in two, precipitating the defection of more than twenty Labour MPs to the SDP during 1981-2 and the creation of a new Liberal-SDP electoral Alliance. Moreover, the effect of significant up-turns in Conservative popularity following the 1982 budget and the Falklands War dashed all further hope for a Labour victory in 1983.⁹ In the event, Labour again secured less than forty percent of the vote, but on this occasion Labour also delivered its worst electoral performance since December 1918.

⁶ 1924: The defeat of the Labour government on 21st January and 8th October 1924 were brought about by defeats on votes of confidence brought by the government rather than votes of no confidence brought by opposition parties (1979).
⁷ LibDem: includes Liberal (1979), Liberal/SDP Alliance (1983, 1987) and Liberal Democrats (1992, 1997)
⁸ Positive sign indicates swing to the Conservatives and negative sign indicates swing to Labour.
⁹ See Sanders et. al (1987)

After Labour's electoral nadir of 1983, the heat of its triple crises slowly dissipated. Indeed, the election to the party leadership of the 'Dream Ticket' of Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley in October was readily acknowledged as one of the first blocks to be laid in rebuilding Labour's sense of unity. Kinnock later remarked that he was committed to Labour's modernisation from the outset of his leadership:

"the purpose of running for the leadership...was to secure changes in policy, in discipline but most basically in the mind-set in the character of the Party as it existed in 1983...We'd been through a 'cultural revolution' as it were and so a lot of that had to be changed...Some of the agenda could be announced, some it couldn't...because it would have shattered everything. So I had my own private agenda".¹⁰

During the first few months of the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership, the new team embarked on a series of reforming initiatives which had all the 'appearance of a prelude to major change'.¹¹ But the reforming zeal of the new leadership was heavily constrained by short-term events outside its immediate sphere of influence. In 1984-5, much of Labour's transformation was effectively halted by the Miners Strike, damaging disputes among Labour activists in local government regarding rate-setting, and the on-going problems associated with the Militant Tendency in Liverpool. Kinnock was only able to proceed unrestrained following the 1985 conference, at which he felt sufficiently free and confident in a single speech both to publicly identify the need for wholesale reform and to rebuke the Labour Left. Moreover, whilst Adam Lent is correct to draw our attention to the existence of observable processes of transformation immediately after the 1983 leadership elections, Kinnock could only proceed with modernisation by securing important strategic majorities in favour of reform inside Labour's decision-making institutions. The creation of a new soft-left alliance supportive of change, especially among the NEC, would only slowly materialise *after* 1985.

The modernisation and renewal of the Labour Party took place in three distinct arenas, and in this respect we can understand Labour's transformation as a process designed to respond to (and overcome) the triple crises which so dominated the post-1979 period. First, party leaders sought to alter the prevailing balance of power inside the party and to regain centralised control of leadership through organisational reforms. Second, the modernisation project was designed to deliver vote maximisation through programmatic

¹⁰ Neil Kinnock cited in Lent (1997), p.10

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.11

moderation. Third, Labour's message could only be delivered more effectively if it embraced professional and centrally controlled strategies for communications and campaigning.

The main intention behind organisational modernisation was to wrestle functional control from grassroots activists by restoring the authority of party leaders and, therefore, to ensure that Labour became a cohesive and disciplined political organisation. This was achieved in two different ways. First, party leaders engaged in the *centralisation* of power. For instance, the policy-making role of the NEC was significantly reduced between 1983 and 1987 by the transfer of key powers to new NEC-Shadow Cabinet policy committees. The leadership also employed a number of outside officials to provide specialist advice and to perform key tasks within a strengthened Leader's Office. Kinnock assumed direct control over the party's electoral and communications strategy as well. The leadership created the Campaigns Strategy Committee, which Kinnock chaired, and also ensured that loyal supporters like Peter Mandelson and Philip Gould occupied key positions within a new Shadow Communications Agency. The centralisation of power was further enhanced by the reform of parliamentary selection procedures. Following the Greenwich by-election in 1987, local parties became subject to tighter central control in the rules governing the selection of parliamentary candidates.

Kinnock acknowledged that alterations to the nature of party *membership* could also extend the authority of party leaders and reinforce membership recruitment initiatives. The leadership recognised that local parties had become particularly powerful arenas for the expression of organised opposition to modernisation and renewal, and they argued against local party power in terms of the identifiably negative effects this had on the recruitment of new members. A key pillar of Labour's organisational transformation, therefore, emphasised the importance of individual membership empowerment and the devolution of important responsibilities traditionally preserved by local party activists. After the 1987 election, the party operated voluntary systems of one-member-one-vote for the constituency section of the leadership electoral college and the NEC, as well as for the nomination of conference delegates. But voluntary OMOV was abandoned in 1990. The system was seen to be procedurally cumbersome and it was subjected to particular hostility from those trade unionists who regarded individual member empowerment as a device designed to reduce the collective institutional power of the

union movement. The issue of individual membership empowerment was held in abeyance until after the 1992 election.

In order to maximise the Labour vote, party leaders recognised the importance of returning the Labour Party to the mainstream of British politics. Such a Downsian strategy would not be successful without an accompanying process of *ideological reform* designed to jettison unpopular policies, challenge the hegemony of Thatcherism, and counter the electoral characteristics of partisan de-alignment. Policy modernisation under Kinnock occurred in two periods. Between 1985 and 1987, little consistent progress was made in reviewing Labour's electoral commitments because the party leadership was required to build workable coalitions with the soft-left within the party's policy-making structures. Although party leaders announced a series of policy departures (for example, on European integration, public spending, full employment and state intervention), these were concealed from the electorate because they were announced intermittently and tentatively, conscious of the need to avoid re-igniting old antagonisms. It was only following Labour's third election defeat in 1987 that the party leadership cemented its alliance for modernisation and renewal, and therefore the period between 1987 and 1992 should be regarded as the phase in which the most comprehensive review of party policy took place.

The Policy Review process began almost immediately after the 1987 election, and during the following four years the seven review groups published a number of keynote statements of policy abandoning traditional commitments towards nationalisation, economic planning, unilateral disarmament and withdrawal from Europe. In their place, party leaders emphasised a 'post-revisionist' ideological agenda designed to portray Labour as a competent party of government, particularly in economic terms. Popular socialism, as it was termed, was noteworthy for its more liberal understanding of the market economy and the importance attached by it to the stimulation of demand through supply-side initiatives. As Peter Kellner observed, 'only by exorcising its historic claim of replacing capitalism can the party think, *and sell*, serious thoughts about how to bring...prosperity to all'.¹²

¹² Kellner quoted in Radice (1992), p.19 – author's emphasis

The third aspect of modernisation and renewal emphasised the importance of developing professional campaigning and *communications* strategies in order to deliver Labour's revised political message. Some early progress was made before the 1987 election. Peter Mandelson was appointed as Labour's communications director in 1985, and he quickly established a powerful strategic community of media advisers and pollsters in close proximity to the leadership. But the most significant reforms in this area occurred between 1987 and 1992. After the 1987 defeat, the Shadow Communications Agency strengthened centralised control of communications. There were a number of ways in which this was achieved. First, the SCA employed modern advertising techniques to deliver Labour's key political objectives. Particular attention was given to an assessment of the means employed in political communications, especially to the language used, the different media available, and the importance of retaining a simplified and easily assimilated political message. The SCA also identified the key communications objective – to alter voters' perceptions of the party and its policies, and to convince the electorate that Labour was 'fit and able to govern'.¹³ Finally, the SCA employed a variety of techniques to measure the success of its strategy. Party leaders paid much closer attention to opinion research, and their advisers undertook systematic analyses of the receptivity of the electorate to Labour's processes of modernisation and policy reform.

Although Labour ran a relatively professional election campaign in 1992, the reforms it undertook during the previous five years did not reap the rewards anticipated by party leaders. Opinion polls showed that the electorate continued (albeit narrowly) to support the policies of the Conservatives. Even where the Policy Review had an effect on voter choice, pollsters identified that the electorate continued to mistrust Labour on key economic questions and, more importantly, they reported that the party leadership lacked overall credibility among voters. The electoral strategy of modernisation, therefore, had failed in two key respects. Labour had not become a 'credible' alternative to the Conservatives, and ordinary voters did not see it as a competent party of government able to see its policies through. Moreover, the electoral effects of the Policy Review were seriously limited. As Heath, Jowell and Curtice reported in 1994, the British Election Study revealed that the Policy Review contributed only 1.1% to Labour's overall policy shift and 2.3% in terms of image effects, and even these may have been over-estimates.¹⁴

¹³ Mandelson, *World in Action*, ITV, 11.05.89

¹⁴ Heath, Jowell and Curtice (1994), p.201

Gerry Taylor's model of monthly poll data averages also showed that the Policy Review added, at most, 2.5% to Labour's popularity in spring 1989, but this effect had almost disappeared by Christmas. Instead, Taylor suggested that the Policy Review had a more significant impact on Kinnock's approval ratings, but whatever gain was realised in the short-term suffered from attrition (at approximately 0.8% per month) thereafter.¹⁵ Either way, both models highlighted that the positive effects of the Policy Review had evaporated long before Labour contested the 1992 general election.

Following its fourth election defeat, Labour entered its final phase of modernisation. The period between 1992 and 1997 became one of *consolidation* of those reforms undertaken during Kinnock's tenure as party leader. Labour's new leadership team under John Smith and Margaret Beckett focused on particular areas where further reform was still outstanding. In organisational terms, Smith announced his intention to review the relationship between the party and the trade unions, with a view to altering the balance of votes at party conference to shift Labour towards a more individualised mass membership. The OMOV reforms, suspended in 1990, were revitalised and eventually adopted at the 1993 conference. The most significant ideological development following the election involved the leadership's adoption of a new rhetorical base which emphasised the importance of 'communitarianism', 'individual responsibility' and 'social justice'. In 1993, Smith commissioned Sir John Borrie to chair an independent commission to investigate further areas for policy development in light of these new ideological themes.

But the Smith leadership was unexpectedly terminated following his untimely death in the spring of 1994. Tony Blair's leadership manifesto highlighted that his prime motivation was to continue with the course of party modernisation and renewal begun under Kinnock to mastermind electoral victory for Labour. Although Blair's New Labour continued to reshape a number of pre-existing policy commitments after 1994, much of its modernising ardour was confined to style and symbolism rather than to substance. One of the major lessons from defeat in 1992 was that the electorate did not regard the modernised Labour Party as being anything substantively 'new'. The birth of New Labour was designed to be a literal embodiment that this was no longer the case. Party strategists paid particular attention to Blair's image as an effective and unifying

¹⁵ Taylor (1997), especially ch.5

party leader, and as a competent future Labour prime minister. Moreover, the reform of Clause IV in 1995 became an important symbolic event in demarcating New Labour from its predecessor. What was particularly significant about its replacement was that, at long last, Labour had managed to agree a clearly defined précis of its ideological positioning, and that the party leadership was sufficiently in control of the party organisation to ensure that its wishes carried the day. The modernisation and renewal of the Labour Party was essentially complete. In an environment dominated by the slow decay of the Conservative's electoral hegemony, New Labour and Tony Blair emerged as a particularly powerful alternative. Labour's eventual electoral success in 1997, therefore, came as no real surprise. What was surprising, nevertheless, was the sheer scale of the electorate's emphatic rejection of Conservatism and the unparalleled distance that Labour had travelled in order to deliver its ultimate prize. Labour's Wilderness Years were finally over.

The Labour Left in historical perspective

The Labour Left of the 1980s and 1990s was a collection of various groups of individuals (including parliamentarians, party members and other activists) who supported a wide range of socialist political objectives, and organised either within the Labour Party or in very close proximity to it. The groups of the modern Labour Left divided into three broad types - the 'extreme-left', the 'hard-left' and the 'soft-left'.

The *extreme-left* is a term used to describe several important revolutionary-socialist or Trotskyite groups, such as the Militant Tendency (est. 1964) or Socialist Organiser (1979), who organised their activities around the Labour Party and the Labour Movement. These groups were committed to a fundamental socialist ideological agenda, typified by support for extensive nationalisation, state control, economic planning, workers' control of industry, and socialist internationalism. The extreme-left typically pursued covert strategies of entryism within the Labour Party. Militant supporters became active party members in order to subvert (or influence) the direction of party policy, capture influential positions within it and, ultimately, to destroy all obstacles to revolutionary socialism including, if necessary, the Labour Party itself. The extreme-left's entryist strategy became much easier to pursue during the 1970s following the abolition of Labour's 'proscribed list' of ideologically incompatible organisations in 1973.

However, the entryism of groups such as Militant was eventually exposed in the late-1970s and early-1980s by the detailed investigations of senior Labour officials, first of Lord Underhill in 1980, then of Ron Hayward and David Hughes in 1982. In June 1982, the party leadership re-introduced a register of non-affiliated organisations in order to exclude the extreme-left and to legitimise the later expulsion of high profile supporters of Trotskyite groups like the Militant Tendency. However, it is important to distinguish between the extreme Labour Left and those other revolutionary-socialist groups which operated outside the Labour Party's immediate political environment. The Labour Left would exclude, therefore, those non-entryist revolutionary organisations such as the Socialist Workers' Party (1977), the Workers' Revolutionary Party (1964), and the Communist Party of Great Britain (1920).¹⁶

The term *hard-left* is used to describe a number of left-wing groups in the Labour Party, such as the Campaign Group (1982), the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (1973) and Labour Left Liaison (1986). In practice, however, the hard-left did not fully emerge as a distinctive grouping until the fragmentation of the Labour Left was well underway and, therefore, the term is most accurately applied when it is used to describe those Labour left-wingers who divorced from Tribune after 1982. The hard-left has consistently favoured a range of radical political objectives, in particular the extension of grassroots party democracy, public ownership, progressive taxation, unilateral nuclear disarmament, and constitutional reform. The most prominent member of the hard-left has been Tony Benn, and the term 'Bennite' has often been used interchangeably with 'hard-left'. Other leading supporters of the hard-left have included Eric Heffer, Jeremy Corbyn, Dennis Skinner, Ken Livingstone and Diane Abbott. The hard-left differed from the extreme-left in several key respects. First, unlike groups such as Militant, Socialist Organiser or other revolutionary movements, it was not necessary for the hard-left to adopt an entryist strategy towards the Labour Party since many of its high profile adherents were already included as parliamentary or local government representatives, or were active trade unionists. Because of such pre-existing positioning within the party, the hard-left escaped the expulsion campaigns that so affected the extreme-left during the mid-1980s, albeit that many 'hard-leftists' publicly rebuked party leaders for doing so.

¹⁶ SWP and WRP: The SWP was previously known as the International Socialists (1960-77) and the Socialist Review Group (1953-60). The WRP was previously known as the Socialist Labour League (1959-73) and 'the Group' (1953-59). Together with the Militant Tendency (previously the Revolutionary Socialist League 1958-64), these groups emerged out of the fragmentation of the original post-war Trotskyite group, the Revolutionary Communist Party (1944-53).

Second, the hard-left accepted the fundamental democratic centrality of the parliamentary system and, unlike the extreme-left, did not seek to ultimately overthrow it via international socialist revolution. Since the mid-1980s, the hard-left assumed the role of an 'opposition' movement to party leadership. It was designed to promote Labour's traditional socialist orthodoxy over the pragmatic and revisionist electoralism of party leaders, and to defend the importance of grassroots membership activism as 'champions' of intra-party democracy.

The term *soft-left* is used to describe a section of the Labour Left which emerged during the early-1980s as an alternative to the Bennite hard-left typified by the Campaign Group and CLPD. Similar to the hard-left, the term became synonymous with the fragmentation of the Labour Left following the Benn-Healey deputy leadership contest in 1981. The soft-left typically represented those more moderate Labour left-wingers who continued to align themselves with the political objectives of existing Labour Left groups, such as Tribune (1964) and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (1978). Consequently, the term 'Tribunite' has often been used interchangeably with 'soft-left'. The soft-left was most apparent at the elite level. Many active soft-leftists were either parliamentarians or trade union leaders, and the soft-left became most visible inside Labour's decision-making structures, especially among the membership of the National Executive Committee. During the 1980s, the soft-left was of particular strategic importance to Neil Kinnock's leadership, since it provided a crucial reservoir of support and legitimacy for the process of party-level modernisation and renewal. Although many soft-leftists supported the electoral necessities surrounding ideological reform, they continued to endorse a range of traditional left-wing principles, including public ownership and Clause 4, unilateral disarmament, increased trade union rights, demand management, and economic planning. But, over time, the influence of the soft-left gradually waned. The ideological distinctiveness of groups like Tribune and the LCC was systematically reduced by the emergence of new coalitions between party leaders and soft-leftists supportive of the Policy Review and organisational reform. A number of leading soft-leftists subsequently took up positions either in the Shadow Cabinet or elsewhere on the front bench, many of whom were given important portfolios of responsibility. By the 1992 election, the soft-left virtually disappeared as an identifiably distinct grouping of the Labour Left. Many of the prominent soft-leftists of the 1980s,

such as Gordon Brown, Jack Straw, Michael Meacher, David Blunkett and John Prescott, went on to serve at the heart of Blair's New Labour.

The eighteen years between the 1979 and 1997 general elections saw both the zenith and nadir of Labour Left influence inside the Labour Party. However, in the broadest of terms it is possible to identify *four* distinct phases to the history of the rise and subsequent decline of the Labour Left during this period. This trend, in many respects, closely mirrors the patterns of crisis, modernisation, and consolidation at the party-level discussed earlier:

- Ascendancy of the Labour Left (1979-82)
- Fragmentation (1982-85)
- Isolation (1985-92)
- Marginalisation (1992-97)

Richard Heffernan identified the particular difficulty of distinguishing a single point of origin for Labour's process of modernisation and renewal.¹⁷ Likewise, it is equally problematic to identify one point in recent history where the ascendancy of the Labour Left was halted and the process of its decline commenced. However, it is widely acknowledged that the 'pinnacle' of Labour Left influence was confined to the 1979-82 period, during which it exerted unrivalled influence over many aspects of the internal life of the Labour Party. As Patrick Seyd observed,

"In 1981 the forward march of the Labour Left had ensured that the party's policies and structures reflected much of its point of view. But this was its pinnacle and from then onwards it descended into internal divisions over policies and personalities...the Labour Left's disintegration, decline and demise is *the* main feature of its contemporary history".¹⁸

Following Labour's general election defeat in May 1979, the Labour Left extended its control over the policy-making apparatus of the party, especially within the National Executive Committee. Moreover, some prominent left-wingers refused to join the opposition front bench in order to lead a left-wing campaign to direct the future of party policy and ensure a return to fundamental socialist values. As Benn remarked,

¹⁷ Heffernan (1998), p.104

¹⁸ Seyd (1987), p.159 – author's emphasis

“I had decided I would not sit on the Opposition Front Bench and that when a leadership election comes up I shall stand...[I heard on radio news that] the most left-wing member of the last Cabinet has resigned...in a bid for the leadership...He wants more socialism and more democracy and a leadership change. Enter stage left Mr. Benn”.¹⁹

The acquisition by the Labour Left of organisational and policy-making influence proved particularly significant in ensuring that many of the radical policies it endorsed were included in Labour's future electoral programmes. The Labour Left also played a central role in the organisational reform of party structures. At the 1979 party conference, left-wingers scored an important victory for grassroots activists by adopting a policy for the mandatory re-selection of sitting Labour MPs during the lifetime of each Parliament. Throughout 1980, the Labour Left also dominated the membership of the committee of enquiry established to review the structures of party organisation. At the 1980 party conference, delegates agreed in principle to the ending of the exclusive right of MPs to elect leaders by creating an electoral college to include trade unionists and constituency activists. These reforms were confirmed at the Wembley special conference held in January 1981, after which a number of leading Labour right-wingers resigned from the party in protest and formed the SDP. In May 1981, Labour assumed control of the Greater London Council when Ken Livingstone, a prominent Labour left-winger, successfully ousted the GLC's right-wing Labour group leader.

However, the ascendancy of the Labour Left was halted following Benn's narrow defeat in the deputy-leadership election at the 1981 party conference. Many of Benn's supporters blamed his defeat on the failure of a number of left-wingers – particularly some members of the Tribune Group – to endorse his candidacy. In early 1982, the parliamentary Labour Left was fragmented into two distinct groupings following the formation of the pro-Benn Campaign Group to rival Tribune. The Labour Left was further weakened at the policy-making level that year through disappointing results in the annual elections to the NEC. In the months preceding the general election, party leaders slowly distanced themselves from some of the more radical policy initiatives supported by the Left. Party leaders also began a publicly divisive internal enquiry into the activities of the Militant Tendency, which culminated in the expulsion of five prominent members in February 1983. Following Labour's spectacular election defeat later that year, the Labour Left's legitimacy and influence rapidly waned. The failure of the Left-sponsored

¹⁹ Benn (1990), pp.498, 500

campaign against local authority rate-capping, together with the defeat of the Miners' Strike in 1985, became particularly important symbols of the declining importance of the Labour Left within the party. At the 1985 conference, party leaders publicly denounced the Labour Left, especially the activities of the leadership of Militant in Liverpool, to which conference delegates afforded a particularly rapturous applause.

Thereafter, the Labour Left's influence continued to depreciate, exacerbated by the development of strategic relationships between some soft-leftists and the party leadership to cement the project of Labour's modernisation. Some left-wing groups, such as the Campaign Group and CLPD, became increasingly isolated. The campaign against the Militant Tendency continued. In February 1986, the NEC endorsed a detailed report into the activities of Militant in the Liverpool District Labour Party. Seven senior party members in Liverpool were expelled, including the deputy leader of Liverpool city council, Derek Hatton; and elsewhere, a number of other constituency parties expelled local Militant sympathisers. At the 1986 party conference, delegates overwhelmingly supported the expulsion of known members of Militant. The Tribune Group also lost much of its earlier ideological distinctiveness during this period, symbolised by its support for key aspects of Labour's Policy Review. The integration of the soft-left and party leadership was graphically represented by the appointment of a number of leading Tribunites to prominent front-bench positions. The existence of this important alliance meant that, by 1989, many of the radical policy options supported by the Labour Left in the early-1980s had been totally excised from Labour's programme, including commitments towards public ownership, unilateralism, economic planning, and withdrawal from Europe.

By the time that Labour contested the 1992 election, the Labour Left was virtually extinct. It had become impossible to distinguish between the soft-left and the party leadership. The Campaign Group was confined to a rather small and obscure group of hard-left parliamentary critics of the Kinnock leadership, and the number of openly left-wing members of the NEC was negligible. The purging of Militant was completed through the expulsion of its most sympathetic MPs (Terry Fields and Dave Nellist), and by the Tendency's decision to openly field a 'Real Labour' candidate against Labour in the Walton by-election.

During the Smith 'interregnum' and under Blair's New Labour, the Labour Left asserted itself only intermittently. Two occasions are worthy of note. First, a number of left-wingers publicly denounced the organisational reforms surrounding the introduction of one-member-one-vote in 1993. Second, there was a temporary revival of left-wing activity during Blair's campaign to revise Clause 4. In January 1995, thirty-two Labour MEPs signed an open letter denouncing Blair's proposals, and a number of 'old Labour' traditionalists coalesced to form the 'Defend Clause Four' campaign. In the event, however, the overwhelming endorsement of Labour's new statement of aims and values, agreed at the special conference in April 1995, demonstrated the extent to which an identifiable Labour Left had long since ceased to be a meaningful player in the internal affairs of the party.

The history of Labour's eighteen years in the electoral wilderness was not one of inexorable decline, rather one of crisis followed by transformation and, more recently under New Labour, by consolidation. Conversely, the history of the Labour Left during this period reveals an early ascendancy which preceded fragmentation, isolation and, since the early-1990s, an apparent extinction. This strongly suggests that the rise and fall of the Labour Left during the 1979-97 period should be understood *as a function of* wider events occurring within the Labour Party itself. The growth of Labour Left influence during the late-1970s and early-1980s filled the vacuum caused by the paralysis of central party leadership in the organisational, ideological, and strategic spheres. Once that vacuum had been plugged following Labour's 1983 defeat, the Labour Left was exposed to relentless degeneration. Moreover, the existence of different 'types' of Labour Left suggested that it lacked both organisational solidity and unity of ideological purpose. The history of its decline, therefore, would be a fragmentary one. As party leaders regained control, some sections of the Labour Left were isolated from mainstream decision-making or were expelled altogether, whereas other more moderate elements joined in new strategic coalitions designed to legitimise party-level transformation in order to deliver eventual electoral victory. By 1992, the far-reaching consequences of party transformation meant that the life of the Labour Left had all but expired. The extreme-left had been totally removed from the Labour Party. The hard-left was reduced to a small and isolated opposition movement committed to an ideological platform rendered

irreconcilable with Labour's electoral success, and the soft-left lost all of its earlier distinctiveness as it became impossible to differentiate it from the party elite. For the first time in more than sixty years, an identifiable Labour Left which upheld traditional socialist values and grassroots democracy over a typically revisionist and centralising party leadership, had virtually disappeared from sight.

3

Out with the Old: Labour's ideological transformation and the de-radicalisation of party membership

The lasting legacy of Labour's electoral performance during the 1980s, especially its cataclysmic poll in 1983, taught a generation of party leaders and officials that the doors to government could not be unlocked without achieving visibly significant degrees of organisational modernisation and ideological reform. Whereas some ideological change was successfully achieved between 1985 and 1987, much of it was obfuscated inside sectoral policy documents or in subtle alterations to presentation and style, most publicly represented by the replacement of Labour's traditional red flag with the more media-friendly red rose in October 1986. The most exhaustive period of programmatic transformation followed the 1987 general election and continued apace until shortly before the start of the 1992 campaign itself. Labour's 'Policy Review' sought to achieve *five* clear objectives – to anticipate trends for the next election, ascertain the priorities of the electorate, further clarify Labour's aims and values, account for existing policy commitments, and to develop presentational strategies to end the media distortion of party policy.¹

Although the Policy Review failed to deliver its underlying strategic goal – the election of a Labour government in 1992 – it provided the mechanism for achieving many of the ideological shifts necessary to ultimately realise that objective. While the reforms between 1987 and 1992 did not reap the immediate electoral benefits anticipated by party leaders, they provided a vital 'engine' for later clarifications in both the substance and presentation of policy. Since much of New Labour rested on the foundation stones of Kinnockite modernisation, Blair's new-model party was not really 'new' in any meaningful sense of the word. Moreover, New Labour symbolised – in a particularly modern form – the historic tendency of past Labour leaders like Wilson and Gaitskell to

¹ Tom Sawyer cited in Hughes and Wintour (1990), p.103

disengage from traditional ideological precepts in favour of revisionist and electorally pragmatic policy options.

It is often suggested that the decline of the Labour Left during the 1980s and 1990s can be understood by appreciating the far-reaching consequences of organisational reforms. Particular attention is given to the emergence of Labour as an electoral-professional party organisation, where party leaders successfully wrestled the organisational balance of power away from grassroots activists and, in doing so, undermined the structural ability of the Left to mobilise activists in defence of traditional socialist opinion. But the permanency of transformation could not be guaranteed through structural reforms alone. Party transformation and the prevention of recurrent factionalism also necessitated the recasting of the ideological foundation stones on which the party organisation itself was built. If a party is broadly united on its ideological objectives, or it at least accepts the strategy behind programmatic reform, then it follows that there would be insufficient demand for factional groupings at the sub-party level. In this instance, the choice open to factions is clear. Factional groups can actively engage in (or tacitly support) processes of ideological change. They could also choose to relentlessly oppose every reforming initiative, causing them to become isolated from the mainstream of the party. Finally, they could opt to disaffiliate (or allow themselves to be expelled), leaving them with little alternative but to stand in direct competition to the party itself.

This chapter considers the contribution of party-level ideological transformation in helping to explain the decline of the Labour Left. Firstly, this chapter assesses the form and *breadth* of policy transformation, particularly the significance of substantive policy reversals in altering the ideological 'playing field' on which the Labour Left galvanised opinion among the wider party. The extent of policy transformation is considered in light of three key ideological variables, which are of particular importance in understanding the historical dimensions of conflict between party leaders and grassroots activists supportive of the Left. First, the approach taken towards the ownership of industry, and the role of government and the state in relation to the market in determining the functioning of the domestic economy. Second, the important differences of opinion inside the party regarding further economic and political integration with continental European states. Third, the historic significance of Labour's defence and security policies, especially the strong activist support for unilateral disarmament and lower

defence spending. Across all three dimensions, the extent of policy shift at the party level was remarkable, particularly during the Policy Review under Neil Kinnock's leadership, but further consolidated under Tony Blair and New Labour. In examining ideological transformation in these areas, this chapter will consider how far Labour travelled in moderating its electoral commitments, and the consequent impact this had in altering the ideological 'playing field' on which various groups of the Labour Left were forced to compete.

Second, this chapter posits that the decline of the Labour Left since the mid-1980s was cemented by an ideological shift which was notable for its *depth* of penetration among party members and ordinary Labour voters. The final section of this chapter contends that the marginalisation of the Left may, in part, be explained by the success of party leaders in minimising 'curvilinear disparity' between party members and ordinary Labour voters. In 1973, John May identified attitudinal asymmetry between the various strata of political parties, such that party members held disproportionately radical ideological positions relative to party electors. The important effect of such divergence, May suggested, was that it could heavily pre-determine the likelihood of a political party successfully adopting the Downsian 'vote-maximising position'. The presence of curvilinear disparity not only implies the existence of (or potential for) intra-party factionalism, but further suggests that the maintenance of ideological heterogeneity between members and voters might affect the electability of political parties. By using data from the British Election Study survey series, we can test whether party-level ideological transformation had the desired effect of creating a de-radicalised party membership where, over time, the body of grassroots opinion shifted much closer to the position of the median Labour voter. Thus, in understanding the role played by party-level ideological factors in explaining the decline of the Left, it is important to appreciate both the general breadth of change and also the depth by which such transformations structurally penetrated the party, its grassroots membership, and the relationship with its voters.

The Policy Review and the 'birth' of New Labour

Labour's ideological positioning towards public ownership and state intervention in the domestic economy reflected one part of the enduring left-right class cleavage so evident

in post-war British politics. Over time, Labour successfully incorporated ‘traditionalist’ and ‘revisionist’ viewpoints on these key economic questions. The revisionist ‘school’ sought to realise Labour’s economic objectives in light of the constraints imposed by the international capitalist environment. Historically, the revisionist position was most apparent under the leadership of MacDonald and Snowden in the 1920s and 1930s, during Gaitskell’s leadership after 1955, and since 1983 under Kinnock, Smith and Blair. Conversely, the traditionalist ‘school’ emphasised the importance of direct state intervention to protect the British economy from an inherently unpredictable international market through trade protectionism, import and capital restrictions, and the public ownership of key industries and services. The traditionalist position found most favour among the Labour Left and became particularly popular following climactic political events, notably after the 1931 financial collapse, under Attlee’s administration after the Second World War, following the defeat of Wilson in 1970, and after Labour’s spectacular defeat in 1979.

Labour’s Alternative Economic Strategy was the last (and most recent) codification of the traditional orthodoxy toward public ownership and the intervention of government in the macro-economic arena. The AES was formulated by prominent Labour left-wingers in the early-1970s, and it was first published as part of *Labour’s Programme 1973*. During the 1974-79 Labour governments, the AES was revised as part of the 1976 *Programme*, although Wilson and Callaghan chose to ignore many of its basic provisions. The AES identified four broad economic objectives:

- a. economic growth through public investment in key industrial and social sectors,
- b. the use of import controls to protect the domestic economy from an oscillating international market,
- c. the use of a strict five-year planning regime to regulate public and private-sector investment, and
- d. the use of price controls to restrict the growth of monopolies and uncontrollable rises in inflation.

An important tenet of the AES concerned the public ownership of the ‘commanding heights’ of the economy – the nationalisation of at least one company in each of the 25 key industrial sectors identified through planning – so as to protect employment and

direct crucial investment where necessary. The ascendancy of the Labour Left after 1979 gave the AES a particular centrality in economic and industrial policy-making. Its provisions were routinely endorsed by party conferences after 1979. The strategy was republished as part of *Labour's Programme 1982*, and much of it subsequently found its way into Labour's 1983 election manifesto.

The extent of Labour's electoral repudiation in the 1983 election encouraged the gradual abandonment of the AES as the cornerstone of the party's economic orthodoxy. In practice, there was little substantive change in policy, at least until 1986, because of the structural impotence of the party's new leadership in presiding over internal policy-making processes, especially in the NEC. Consequently, for much of the 1983-7 period, Kinnock had little alternative but to reaffirm existing commitments, particularly towards nationalisation and public ownership. In 1984, the NEC announced that a future Labour government would immediately re-nationalise those utilities privatised by the Conservatives and would provide only limited shareholder-compensation on the basis of 'no-speculative gain'.² However, the explosion of mass share-ownership, encouraged by the privatisation of British Telecom in November 1984 and the imminent sell-off of British Gas (privatised in December 1986), rendered renationalisation and shareholder compensation unrealistic future policies to pursue.

In 1985, Kinnock invited John Smith and David Blunkett to convene a working party to re-examine Labour's policy of public ownership. Whereas this revived short-term attention at the lack of progress made in this field since 1983, the working party helped to cement an evolving coalition between party leaders and the soft-left.³ Kinnock hoped that the working party would deliver an effective compromise between the antipathy of Labour traditionalists towards private capital and the hostility shown by Labour right-wingers to significant extensions of the state-sector. Although the group's 1986 report declared that Labour should avoid returning to the unpopular and unaccountable forms of Morrisonian nationalisation characteristic of past Labour administrations, it also contested that the fundamental principles of Clause 4 remained intact and held an important contemporary relevance. It was contended that Thatcherite privatisations

² Labour Party (1984a)

³ Thomas (1986), p.48

perpetuated damaging inequalities in power and wealth, such that mass share-ownership was incompatible with Labour's conception of a modern democracy.⁴

The report's proposals concerning the creation of 'socially-owned industries' essentially represented a 'half-way-house' between nationalisation and privatisation. The main instrument of 'social-ownership' involved the creation of British Enterprise, a government agency designed to facilitate industrial restructuring, the acquisition of government share-equity, and the management of public-private joint ventures to boost key sectoral investment. The new agency was designed to operate at arms-length from government, presumably to dispel criticism that Labour's policies continued to afford significant powers to the state sector. BE would also encourage worker-participation in planning arrangements, particularly to identify areas for further research and training, marketing and infrastructure development. But the proposals gave little indication of the sources of BE funding and, therefore, it became difficult to assess its real scope and remit.

Nonetheless, the Smith-Blunkett report produced two significant results. First, it showed that Labour was capable of developing imaginative new ideas for industrial ownership and accountability. Second, it highlighted the growing ability of party leaders to lock the soft-left into its programme for modernisation and renewal. Social ownership successfully 'adumbrated' the Labour Left's high ideological rhetoric on public ownership. The report 'sugared the pill' and encouraged a further 'shifting equilibrium of forces' away from the Left on this important ideological dimension.⁵

The main barrier to the longevity of social ownership rested on the continuing electoral popularity of the Conservatives, especially the belief among voters that large and cumbersome nationalised industries were irreconcilable with an internationally competitive domestic economy. The lessons of Labour's 1987 defeat suggested to party leaders that future ideological modernisation needed to account for new global economic realities and, furthermore, without further shifts in public ownership policy Labour could not hope for electoral success.

⁴ Labour Party (1986c)

⁵ Shaw (1994), p.49

The first significant departure came with the publication of *Meet the Challenge Make the Change* in 1988 – Labour’s first Policy Review document after the election. The report acknowledged the critical role played by the market and private capital in the functioning of the economy:

“the market and competition are essential in meeting the demands of the consumer, promoting efficiency and stimulating innovation, and [is] often the best means of securing all the myriad [of] incremental changes which are needed to take the economy forward”.⁶

However, the report avoided any new commitments towards industrial ownership, largely because of a temporary breakdown in the consensus between Kinnock and the soft-left. Some soft-leftists, such as Michael Meacher, concurred that there was no longer any ‘socialist objection to the technical conception of the market’. Others, like Bryan Gould and David Blunkett, continued to support the 1986 social ownership proposals to delimit the role of the private sector.⁷ This caused the report to be confused and unclear in a number of respects. First, it failed to account for the popularity of recent privatisations undertaken by the Conservative government. Second, while the report suggested that privatised companies, in principle, should be returned to some form of state control, it considered their full-scale re-nationalisation as an option far too costly to consider. Whereas Labour sought to regain control of British Telecom by purchasing just two percent of shares, it proposed to return the water industry to ‘public control’ without specifying how this could be accomplished. The report also contended that Labour could deliver industrial accountability elsewhere *without* purchasing share-equity.⁸

‘Meet the Challenge’ was also significant because it placed considerable emphasis on the *regulation* of industry rather than on the ownership of it. The report proposed to establish powerful Regulatory Commissions to achieve many of the goals of public ownership (particularly consumer protection) without the need either to purchase shares on open financial markets or to fund Exchequer compensation for ordinary shareholders.⁹ As the Review progressed, it was evident that Labour’s social ownership proposals had evaporated in favour of market regulation and consumer protection.¹⁰ The final review

⁶ Labour Party (1989a), p 10

⁷ *Tribune*, 04.12.87

⁸ Labour Party (1989a), p.15

⁹ *ibid.*, p.15

¹⁰ Labour Party (1990b), p.17

report, published in 1991, excised all references to social ownership.¹¹ Instead of repudiating the prevailing neo-liberal market framework, Labour proposed an industrial strategy that overtly recognised the centrality of market forces and private capital in helping it to deliver its agenda for ‘social justice’ and ‘economic equality’.

These shifts in policy were strongly associated with changing perceptions of the state-market relationship. As with public ownership, Labour historically incorporated traditionalist and revisionist viewpoints regarding state-market relations. The revisionists afforded a central role to demand-management in determining the collective control of the economy. But the economic crises of the 1970s highlighted the growing impotence of domestic governments in stimulating demand and withstanding the international pressures of globalisation. The established Keynesian consensus on which so much of post-war British politics was built had become increasingly outmoded. The traditionalist position of the Labour Left, however, emphasised the importance of an active supply-side role for the state and government.

The defeat of the Callaghan administration in 1979 convinced the Left that structured economic planning (*dirigisme*) was essential to achieve the co-ordination of private-sector investment in key industrial sectors. Planning would assist the growth of hi-tech industries, ease long-term structural readjustment among ailing primary and manufacturing industries, and could rectify the harmful effects of regional economic imbalances. The cornerstone of the Left’s supply-side approach involved the revival of the National Economic Planning Council, alongside the creation of a new planning department to oversee the formulation of five-year plans. As Labour’s Programme 1982 suggested,

“Our industrial strategy has two fundamental objectives: to make industry more efficient and to make it more democratic. We judge efficiency not just by the levels of productivity, but by the ability of industry to meet the needs of society. By democracy, we mean the accountability of industry both to its workers through structures of industrial democracy, and to the community as a whole through a system of planning...We believe that our economy will remain inefficient as long as the use of resources is uncoordinated and the real skills and potential of working people are suppressed by their exclusion from decision-making”.¹²

¹¹ Labour Party (1991), p.4

¹² Labour Party (1982a), pp.38-9

Labour's 1983 manifesto attempted to reconcile the revisionist and traditionalist approaches to state-market relations. Whereas Michael Foot and Peter Shore favoured demand-management over planning, the Left in the NEC sought to further limit the prerogatives of private capital in influencing the direction of the economy. However, the most damaging impression given by the manifesto was not that it compromised between these two positions, rather that it failed to appreciate the new international economic realities of the 1980s. Labour exaggerated the potential for government influence over the economy and failed to recognise the growing international resistance to centralised planning. Hence, while Labour applauded the importance of dirigisme in 1983, the French socialist government abandoned it the following year.

The absence of a workable coalition through which to alter Labour's positioning on the state-market relationship meant that Kinnock made intermittent progress on this dimension following the 1983 defeat. Only two documents were published between 1983 and 1987, both of which retained the accommodation between revisionist and traditionalist viewpoints. *Investing in Britain* (1985) proposed the creation of a British Investment Bank to generate long-term investment at preferential loan rates. The report acknowledged the propensity of City institutions to concentrate investment abroad rather than at home. To tackle this, Labour proposed that companies with large overseas holdings should invest a pre-determined proportion of their share portfolios in BIB loan-stock. Government would ensure compliance through a range of sanctions, in particular the withholding of fiscal privileges and other direct credits. Interventionist mechanisms continued to be viewed as the best means of eliciting crucial private-sector investment in the economy.¹³

These proposals were diluted shortly before the 1987 election. *New Industrial Strength for Britain* (1987) suggested a much less interventionist role for BIB, acting more as a facilitator rather than an enforcer of investment. The NEC also abandoned proposals for worker-participation in public-private joint ventures, and retreated from its earlier commitment to a separate planning council and department in favour of a weaker development corporation.¹⁴ More importantly, these shifts in thinking underscored broader reassessments of Labour's approach to the private-sector. Market forces were no

¹³ Labour Party (1985), pp.16-24

¹⁴ Labour Party (1987a), pp.13-14

longer viewed as inherently exploitative, merely as ineffective in guaranteeing the sustainability of economic growth. As Kinnock remarked shortly before the 1987 election, ‘the market is a potentially powerful force for good – it can be a remarkable co-ordinating mechanism’.¹⁵

In a similar vein to the reform of Labour’s public ownership policy after 1987, the shift in thinking on state-market relations was heavily dependent on the maintenance of strategic coalitions between party leaders and the soft-left. Such reliance on the soft-left meant that the first phase of policy transformation was dominated by the quasi-interventionism of advocates of the ‘developmental state’, whereas the consolidation of leadership power after 1989 allowed Kinnock to subsequently embrace more neo-liberal interpretations of the ‘social-market’ and ‘enabling-state’.

Much of the thinking behind the ‘developmental’ approach came from Bryan Gould, Labour’s front-bench spokesperson on industrial affairs, and several of his closest advisers in the Industrial Strategy Group. Gould recognised that the market contained inherent limitations by encouraging multinationals to pursue localised corporate interests rather than those of society as a whole. Multinational companies typically lacked the structural flexibility to accommodate different regional employment patterns, necessitating planning in ‘those parts of the economy where intervention [would] have the most significant impact’ on economic growth and regional development.¹⁶ Gould proposed the revival of the Left’s Medium Term Industrial Strategy as well as providing for a strengthened Department of Trade to combat City short-termism and to direct investment in research, employee training and new technologies.¹⁷ The proposals also repeated earlier interventionist devices, notably the creation of the BIB and British (Technology) Enterprise to co-ordinate long-term investment and to oversee the sale of government bonds to provide ‘vast sums for investment for relatively little outlay’.¹⁸ In the event, however, *Meet the Challenge* abandoned Gould’s proposals for the issue of bonds, and avoided further commitments on the funding of new quasi-government agencies.¹⁹ As Gould himself recognised, investment bonds could militate against the

¹⁵ Kinnock (1986), p.42

¹⁶ Industrial Strategy Group (1989), p.13

¹⁷ Labour Party (1989a), pp.10-11

¹⁸ quoted in an earlier draft of *Meet the Challenge* entitled *Supply Side Socialism*. This passage was removed for final version.

¹⁹ Labour Party (1989a), pp.12-13

party's long-term electability by reminding multinational companies that some sections of the Labour elite continued to endorse instruments of government intervention in the economy.²⁰

Following the endorsement of Meet the Challenge at the 1989 conference, Kinnock replaced Gould with Gordon Brown, who was a more enthusiastic proponent of the model of the enabling-state and social-market. Although social-marketeers acknowledged that market forces were often defective in addressing the structural needs for investment, they stressed the importance of *enabling* private-sector investment rather than intervening to guarantee it. As later Policy Review reports suggested, government intervention should be reserved for areas where the market was either unwilling to act or structurally unable to do so. Brown proposed a number of measures to encourage private-sector investment, including capital allowances, tax privileges and fiscal credits for research and development, the release of local authority housing receipts to fund the expansion of the social housing market, and incentives to encourage the growth of small and medium-sized businesses.²¹ Brown also narrowed the scope of the BIB by distancing it further from the Treasury and by restricting its remit to the rectification of sectoral under-investment.²²

Labour went forward into the 1992 election, therefore, with a markedly different conception of state-market relations. Although Brown's social-market model bore little resemblance to the dirigisme of Labour's 1983 manifesto, it failed to have any significant medium-term impact on voters. The early polling gains of the Policy Review in 1989-90 had largely evaporated.²³ It was evident that further policy reform was still necessary, not least that Labour continued to retain the constitutional shibboleth of Clause 4, aspiring to the 'common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange'.

Labour's ideological positioning towards European integration represented a second key area of policy transformation. Within six years, party leaders reversed Labour's

²⁰ Industrial Strategy Group (1989), p.85

²¹ Labour Party (1990b), p.15; Labour Party (1991), pp.8-10

²² Labour Party (1990b), p.17

²³ Taylor (1997), p.117

'isolationist' policy of withdrawal in favour of more 'constructive' and overtly pro-European approaches. By the time that Labour contested the 1992 campaign, it publicly affirmed support for the European social charter, for British participation in the European exchange rate mechanism, for an extension of subsidiarity and qualified majority voting, and for the granting of additional powers to the European Parliament.

Labour's policy of withdrawal from Europe, so visibly associated with its 1983 manifesto, was the product of a decade of traditionalist opposition to integration. The Labour Left's early antipathy towards Europe revolved around the terms of accession finalised by the Heath government in 1971, renegotiated by Labour in 1974-5. The Left identified a number of areas of concern. First, the Common Agricultural Policy prevented low-cost food producers outside the Community from obtaining commercial access to British markets. This deeply affected the important relationships between Britain, its Commonwealth partners, and the wider developing world. Second, the functioning of the Community budget, especially its prioritisation of agricultural price support, undermined the broader interests of the British economy. Moreover, the Community's financial framework needed to more readily account for the balance between national contributions and receipts. Third, membership of the Community and the opening-up of markets could encourage unacceptable rises in unemployment. In order to tackle the economic problems faced by many European states, the Labour Left emphasised the need for governments to adopt global rather regional solutions. Fourth, there was particular concern that European integration would lead to the future harmonisation of purchase tax (VAT). Fiscal harmonisation would extend taxation on essential items, and would disproportionately affect those in poverty. Finally, integration implied a reduction in the sovereignty of Westminster, especially in determining regional, industrial and fiscal policies. The legal base of European treaties could prevent future Labour governments from controlling the movement of capital to protect British jobs and balance of payments. Despite the renegotiations undertaken by Labour and the subsequent referendum campaign, large sections of the Labour Party continued to view European integration as antithetical to Britain's long-term political and economic interests.²⁴

²⁴ LPACR 1972; Labour Party (1973). For a detailed discussion of the Labour Party and the European issue during the 1960s and 1970s see Robins (1979), especially chs. 6-7

Labour's election defeat in 1979 and the ascendancy of the Labour Left shifted the party's European policy explicitly towards withdrawal. The Left contended that Community membership undermined the capability of future Labour governments to pursue an Alternative Economic Strategy, since membership prohibited the introduction of import controls, protection of British markets abroad, and provision of government subsidy to support crucial sectoral industries. As Labour's 1982 *Programme* asserted,

"The single most important advantage of withdrawal will be the ability of the next Labour government to determine its own economic and industrial policies...Withdrawal will mean that we will be able to carry out the party's economic strategy without hindrance from the Community...We would once again be free to determine our own policy on a whole range of important issues...We would be able to restore to the UK the democratic processes which have been undermined by our membership".²⁵

Such positioning towards Europe undoubtedly exacerbated an emergent secessionist movement among disillusioned sections of the party, especially among Labour right-wingers. As Crewe and King observed, Labour's anti-European policy provided the SDP's Gang of Four with a significant ideological motivation by which to lead their party after 1981 – it was on the European question that the SDP chose to issue its first substantive policy statement.²⁶

One of the most durable explanations for Labour's 1983 defeat contended that the party's policies towards Europe had become unrealistic and damaging to long-term British interests. As in other areas, however, the re-appraisal of policy was slow and cautious. Although Kinnock quickly indicated his personal wish to soften Labour's stance on Europe, much of his party remained opposed to further integration. Even during the ratification of the Single European Act in 1986-7, the leadership signalled its opposition to the Commission's single market initiatives by announcing that Labour MPs would oppose the government and reject ratification.²⁷ But European integration was not a dominant theme in the 1987 election campaign. This was largely due to the resolution of Britain's budgetary disputes with the Community at the 1984 Fontainebleau summit. Moreover, the single market programme had neither filtered down into the domestic political arena, nor had it become an issue of significant media importance. This allowed

²⁵ Labour Party (1982a), pp.230-32

²⁶ Crewe and King (1995), p.106

²⁷ Judge (1988)

the Labour leadership to conceal the relative lack of policy shift towards Europe made between 1983 and 1987.

Following the 1987 election, party leaders developed more engaging European policies by effecting reform in three key areas. First, the leadership responded to growing concern at the lack of democratic accountability of European institutions. In *Meet the Challenge*, the leadership endorsed the development of stronger legislative frameworks for the European Parliament, extending qualified majority voting to cover all social and environmental legislation, and encouraging greater transparency and openness of decision-making among the Commission and Council of Ministers.²⁸

Second, the address by Jacques Delors to the 1988 TUC congress convinced party leaders of the importance of introducing a pan-European social charter to improve general living and working conditions. Delors' speech provided Labour with an important opportunity to disengage from the New Right's renewed Euro-scepticism, especially following Thatcher's isolation on social policy at the Madrid summit in June 1988 and her subsequent Bruges speech questioning the centralising tendencies of European institutions. The NEC quickly published a consultative document on social policy in which party leaders endorsed the need for the eventual ratification of European social legislation.²⁹ In April 1989, Kinnock reaffirmed this position at the Welsh TUC conference, declaring that a future Labour government should play 'a direct influential role in fashioning institutions and relationships of the market in which our economy must work in order to prosper'. By suggesting that Thatcherite conceptions of integration implied a 'two-speed Europe', Kinnock observed that 'a second-speed Britain will not generate the wealth which is essential to sustain and enhance the prosperity and to expand the justice and freedom of the British people'.³⁰

Labour also managed to bring about an important policy shift concerning European economic and monetary union. Labour traditionally opposed efforts to unify European currencies. In 1978, Callaghan rejected British participation in a European exchange rate mechanism, declaring that currency union would undermine British national sovereignty over economic affairs. The Conservatives pursued a similar approach after 1979. But,

²⁸ Labour Party (1989a), p.80

²⁹ Labour Party (1989b)

³⁰ *Independent*, 29.04.89

following the 1987 defeat, Labour leaders announced that they would consider currency union if the European Commission developed co-ordinated strategies for sustained economic growth, and allowed national central banks to be closely involved in currency price-setting and exchange.³¹ At the 1990 conference, John Smith suggested that Britain should enter the ERM as a means of combating high inflation and rising interest rates.³² On the last day of the conference, the Government announced that it would take sterling into the ERM, albeit at a price slightly higher than that envisaged by Labour's treasury team. To maintain a substantive polling lead over the Conservatives on this issue, Smith indicated that he was prepared to support the establishment of a single currency and the creation of a European Central Bank to administer it. The main concern for party leaders was that a central bank should maintain elements of democratic accountability, and that a single currency should prioritise economic growth and the reduction of economic disparities between member states.³³ By endorsing the single currency, Labour signalled its tacit acceptance of binding fiscal and budgetary instruments over the economy to ensure eventual British participation in the Euro-zone. Above all, such acceptance of controls over the economy indicated the extent to which Labour had brought about a substantive policy shift on European integration. In marked contrast to the Conservatives, Labour had managed by 1992 to successfully orient itself as the most overtly pro-European of the major British political parties.

Labour's policy towards nuclear security and defence spending was a third important area of policy shift under Kinnock's leadership. The internal party debates regarding the use and deployment of nuclear weapons in response to a global security environment dominated by the Cold War, reflected a clash of philosophy that fuelled wider perceptions of Labour as a divided and factionalised party. The nuclear debate split the party at all levels – in Parliament, at conference, in the constituencies, and even at branch level. As in other areas of policy, party members tended to subscribe to two distinct schools of thought on the nuclear question – what we may term the 'pro-nuclear' versus 'unilateralist' dimension.

³¹ Labour Party (1989a), p.14

³² LPACR 1990, p.29; see also Labour Party (1990b), p.7

³³ Labour Party (1991), pp.14-15

Labour's pro-nuclear supporters subscribed to the belief that the party's first duty in government was to uphold the security of the United Kingdom within an international security environment eclipsed by superpower hostility and the Cold War. To do so required both the ownership and management of a domestic nuclear arsenal, and international co-operation with British allies inside NATO in pursuit of a strategy of 'Flexible Nuclear Response'. Over time, most Labour leaders have tended to support this view and, indeed, it has been Labour rather than the Conservatives who have taken Britain's key post-war defence and security decisions. Attlee and Bevin took the first crucial step in 1947 by producing Britain's first atomic bomb. In the 1960s, Wilson agreed to purchase the Polaris weapons system. During the 1974-79 Labour government, it was agreed to develop the Chevaline warhead at a cost in excess of £1bn and to undertake co-operation with NATO allies in procuring the ground-launched Cruise missile system.

The unilateralist tradition also had strong historical roots within the Labour Party, identifiable as early as the pacifism shown by some parliamentarians during the First World War. The debate on unilateral disarmament played an important part in the traditionalist-revisionist debates of the late-1950s and early-1960s that culminated in the successful adoption of a unilateralist policy at the 1960 conference. Unilateralists regarded the use and ownership of nuclear weapons as undermining British, European and international security. Anti-nuclear sentiment adopted a particularly moralistic and anti-American overtone by citing the damaging effects of a global arms race, the problems of NATO's policy of short warning times, multiple deep strikes, and the inevitable consequences of accidental nuclear war. In reply, their opponents suggested that unilateralism represented a direct challenge to British security and, as Stuart Croft pessimistically concluded, 'the unilateralist challenge would make Labour unelectable, Britain undefendable and NATO untenable'.³⁴

The Labour Left historically supported unilateralism with particular vigour. The ascendancy of the Left after Labour's defeat in 1979 left unilateralists in much more influential policy-making positions. Although unilateralism and anti-Europeanism evidently fuelled the secession of the SDP, the organisational positioning of well-known unilateralists like Michael Foot and Tony Benn gave the anti-nuclear movement its most

³⁴ Croft (1992), p.202

significant chance to alter Labour's existing defence policies. As the 1982 Programme suggested,

“The most urgent priority for Britain, as for the rest of the world, is to draw back from the nuclear abyss...Real security is not achieved by the nuclear arms race...We therefore intend that in future Britain should adopt a non-nuclear defence strategy”.³⁵

Labour's defence programme for the 1983 campaign committed the party to the cancellation of Trident, the phasing-out of Polaris through arms reduction talks, the closure of all American air force bases in Britain, and the reduction of domestic defence spending to the European average. These commitments proved particularly unpopular with voters. As Byrd reported, Labour's policies generated a Conservative lead over Labour on this issue of up to 67%.³⁶ Policy differences were also apparent between the party leader and his deputy. Whereas Foot remained committed to the immediate dismantling of Polaris, Healey contended that the recurrent failure of bilateral arms reduction talks meant that Britain, at least in the short-term, would have little option but to retain its nuclear capabilities.

The election of a committed unilateralist as party leader in 1983 did not pose any immediate challenge to non-nuclear defence policy. In light of Labour's defeat, Kinnock sought to retain unilateralist approaches to security without re-igniting damaging divisions inside his Shadow Cabinet. Instead, Kinnock contended that Labour needed an 'applied' policy of unilateralism that accounted for Britain's role in a new global environment of military and economic interdependence. Labour was also seen to be weak on defence. Although these perceptions were buttressed by Thatcher's victory in her 1982 Falklands War, they were also systematically reinforced by wildly inaccurate media stories of Labour's relationships with the Kremlin and of party leaders' disregard for the perceived Soviet military threat to western security.

The first substantive reassessment of security policy was published in 1984. *Defence and Security for Britain* retained much of the existing programme for unilateral disarmament, particularly the commitments to the closure of airbases, the development of a NATO policy of 'no first-strike', and the establishment of continental nuclear-free zones. However the document contained several important departures. First, party leaders

³⁵ Labour Party (1982a), p 247

³⁶ Byrd (1988), p.166

replaced commitments to reduce defence spending to the European average by emphasising the need to increase expenditure on conventional armed forces instead. Second, to address Labour's polling deficit (especially on NATO policy) the document stressed the importance of future Labour governments remaining committed to the Atlantic Alliance.³⁷

Shortly before the 1987 election, the NEC published a second statement of defence policy. *Modern Britain in a Modern World* confirmed most aspects of the earlier document, particularly that a British commitment to NATO should be veiled beneath broader assurances for conventional armed forces. Although Kinnock attempted to gain the support of international governments for Labour's new policy, the prevalence of centre-right governments in NATO states meant that, at least in the short-term, he was unable to do so. Kinnock's meeting with President Reagan in March 1987 was rather ineffective, and what little progress was made was undermined by Thatcher's simultaneous visit to Moscow and the friendly reception given to her by President Gorbachev.³⁸ Of particular concern to the Soviet government was that Labour's policy of 'applied unilateralism' might complicate the delicate balance of East-West rapprochement. Whereas Soviet support for Labour damaged the party's electoral fortunes in 1983, its implied criticism of Labour's new defence and security policies in 1987 appeared not to help it either.³⁹ *Modern Britain* also endorsed a highly significant policy shift towards Cruise missiles. For as long as international negotiations on the reduction of intermediate nuclear weapons continued, a future Labour government would suspend its programme for the removal of American bases from British soil.⁴⁰

These substantive amendments to security policy were undermined by a series of presentational errors during the 1987 campaign. In a television interview, Kinnock allowed himself to be drawn into a hypothetical discussion concerning the impact of a Soviet military attack, conceding that non-nuclear policies could increase the chances of Soviet occupation.⁴¹ In a radio interview some days later, John Smith appeared confused by implying that British armed forces in Germany could successfully counteract a Soviet

³⁷ Labour Party (1984b)

³⁸ *Financial Times*, 12.03.87; Jenkins (1987), pp.308-11

³⁹ see Croft (1991)

⁴⁰ Labour Party (1986b)

⁴¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 28.05.87

military attack without battlefield nuclear weapons.⁴² These errors perpetuated the image of Labour as devoid of clear security frameworks. The Conservatives mounted a visually effective poster campaign in which a British soldier was pictured surrendering beneath the caption 'Labour's Policy on Arms'. Labour's new policy of 'applied unilateralism' and the media errors made during the campaign cost the party up to three percent of its vote.⁴³ Although around one-quarter of all British voters supported unilateralism, Labour secured the votes of only around one-half of them.⁴⁴ As Jones and Reece remarked,

"...whilst the party political consensus [on defence and security] may have broken down, the views of the electorate...have not changed appreciably for some considerable period of time".⁴⁵

The reform of defence policy continued apace after Labour's 1987 defeat. Aside from two composite resolutions on unilateralism put before the party conference that year, party leaders made early progress by neutralising the defence issue in favour of more visible socio-economic reforms. During a prime-time television interview in June 1988, Kinnock revealed that he no longer supported unilateralism. Although Kinnock later retracted much of his statement, these remarks led to a damaging split inside the Shadow Cabinet, culminating in the resignation of Denzil Davies as the party's defence spokesperson.⁴⁶ The longer-term effect of Kinnock's policy shift away from unilateralism created an immediate hiatus in the review of Labour's defence programme. First, it revealed that there was little strategic benefit from discussing in public what was obviously divisive in private. Second, it reminded party strategists of the significance of the defence issue in understanding the background of electoral defeat in 1983 and 1987.⁴⁷

The abandonment of 'applied unilateralism' after 1988 was not supported universally throughout the parliamentary party. In March 1988, the parliamentary CND group demanded that 'a Labour government should eliminate all British nuclear weapons systems in the lifetime of the first parliament and should ensure the removal of remaining US weapons within the same period'.⁴⁸ Within twelve months, party leaders excised all references to unilateralism. When *Meet the Challenge* was endorsed in 1989, it

⁴² *Sunday Times*, 31.05.87

⁴³ Heath and MacDonald (1987)

⁴⁴ see Labour Party (1988b), p.12

⁴⁵ Jones and Reece (1990), p.64

⁴⁶ *Financial Times*, 24.03.88

⁴⁷ Croft (1992), p.210

⁴⁸ Parliamentary CND (1988), p.4

made no mention of non-nuclear policies⁴⁹, and at the 1990 conference a unilateralist motion was defeated by over 1.5 million votes.⁵⁰ When Labour's final policy review document was published in 1991, Gerald Kaufman proclaimed that there was no longer any 'commitment whatever by the Labour Party, by a Labour government, to divest Britain of nuclear weapons where others retain them'.⁵¹ In practice, however, the dramatic events surrounding the end of the Cold War caused the convenient neutralisation of what was an electorally damaging issue.

In these three key areas of policy, therefore, the Policy Review process effected a substantial transformation in the party's ideological programme. Labour's 1992 manifesto bore little resemblance to the manifesto presented with such notoriety only a decade before. The party no longer advanced public ownership as a key tenet of an alternative economic strategy. Indeed, it advocated no alternative strategy at all. Labour accepted the permanency of market forces and sought to regulate them through quasi-government institutions rather than replacing them by direct interventionist instruments at the state level. As long as private capital operated in the interests of society, there could be no ideological objection to the market. The party also visibly abandoned its traditional antipathy towards Europe. By becoming overtly pro-European in outlook, Labour accepted the declining importance of the nation-state and domestic governments in shaping economic and social policy. In place of withdrawal, Labour endorsed a pan-European social charter, further transfers of power to European institutions, and acknowledged the importance of economic integration through an irrevocable locking of domestic currencies into a new Euro currency.

Finally, Labour abandoned its support for unilateral nuclear disarmament. The leadership recognised the insecurities of the post-Cold War era, especially given the ongoing turmoil in Central and Eastern Europe, and it anchored Labour's defence policy with weaker multilateral alternatives in order to combat further nuclear proliferation abroad. Labour also endorsed NATO as the only effective umbrella organisation capable of providing domestic, regional and international security. The effect of such policy shifts in these three key areas, as in others, was to transform Labour into a fundamentally different kind

⁴⁹ Labour Party (1989a), pp.84-8

⁵⁰ LPACR 1990, p.190

⁵¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 17.04.91

of political organisation. By exorcising the ‘ghosts’ which had so haunted Labour during the 1980s, Kinnock hoped that his party could now realise its *raison d’être* as a credible party of government. Although Kinnock proved unsuccessful in his endeavours, his lasting legacy remained the ‘birth’ of New Labour.

New Labour and the consolidation of ideological transformation

The term ‘New Labour’ is a convenient label allowing us to differentiate between two types of Labour Party. On one hand, the traditional activist-driven branch-mass party of the 1980s and before, supportive of nationalisation, redistribution and unilateralism. On the other, the more centralised, electorally competitive, ‘media-friendly’ catch-all party of the mid-1990s, endorsing regulated market forces, Conservative public expenditure limits, social justice and economic prudence. Moreover, the term ‘New Labour’ became acceptable shorthand notation since it is applied synonymously with the leadership of Tony Blair. Although this is partly because the new Labour leader heavily publicised the term from the outset of his leadership, it is also true, in part, because he was strategically *able* to do so. To arrive at an end-point where a political party can seriously ‘market’ itself as being something altogether new, demands both an objective vision for the future and also a widely held recognition among voters that ideological transformation has been successfully undertaken. It would be misleading, therefore, to talk of ‘New Labour’ as an electoral phenomenon confined to the post-1994 era. The extent of organisational and ideological reforms undertaken by Kinnock between 1987 and 1992 suggested that, in fact, the ‘birth’ of New Labour had occurred some years before – possibly as early as 1988 – albeit that most voters and some commentators did not fully recognise it.

Labour’s fourth election defeat in April 1992 was quickly followed by the announcement that Kinnock and Hattersley intended to resign. The obvious candidate to succeed Kinnock was the Shadow Chancellor, John Smith. Margaret Beckett appeared to be the most likely successor to Hattersley, although she was challenged for the deputy-leadership by fellow left-wingers Bryan Gould and John Prescott. Smith secured an emphatic 91% of the votes at the special conference held in July 1992, and Beckett was appointed with a convincing 58%. As with other leadership contests, the Smith-Beckett ‘ticket’ was an effective left-right compromise designed to accommodate modernisers and traditionalists.

Smith did not seem to have grand visions to reconstruct Labour's ideological platform much further. As Patrick Seyd observed, Smith displayed the qualities of a 'rather cautious, pragmatic social-democrat committed to redistribution'.⁵² The Smith 'interregnum' undertook few policy initiatives of its own.⁵³ Instead of extensive policy reform over-and-above that put in place by Kinnock, the two years of the Smith leadership was more notable for its internal organisational changes and the review of Labour's relationship with the trade unions.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, in several areas of policy, Smith managed to further consolidate the shifts in thinking effected by Kinnock's Policy Review.

First, the Smith leadership commissioned the centre-left think tank IPPR, under the stewardship of Sir Gordon Borrie, to investigate how a future Labour government might provide for social justice, welfare reform and additional government spending on public services without the consequent need to raise direct taxation. The over-riding objective for the new leadership was to dispel perceptions that Labour remained a 'tax-and-spend' party, without undermining Labour's long-term commitment to protect those most at risk from social exclusion and to defend key public services like education and health. However, the Borrie Commission on Social Justice outlived Smith, and it was not able to deliver its final report until October 1994.⁵⁵

Secondly, the Smith leadership reinvigorated the debate on constitutional reform, particularly the replacement of the first-past-the-post electoral system with proportional voting. Before the 1992 election, Labour announced its policy for the introduction of a charter of basic social rights, freedom of information legislation, the decentralisation of power from Whitehall to the regions, and the reform of the House of Lords. Labour had already started to coalesce with the Liberal Democrats on these issues, particularly in debates on regional devolution held among the Scottish constitutional convention after 1989. On electoral reform, however, the Smith leadership preferred to put further policy development in the hands of its own commission on electoral reform, headed by Raymond Plant. Dissatisfied with the commission's final proposals, especially towards the proposed supplementary voting method, Smith committed Labour to the holding of

⁵² Seyd (1997), p.50

⁵³ Butler and Kavanagh (1997), p.48

⁵⁴ Labour Party (1993)

⁵⁵ for a detailed examination of the policy changes suggested by Borrie's Commission on Social Justice see Taylor (1997), ch. 6

a referendum on this issue when in government. To date, this has remained Labour's policy on electoral reform.

Finally, the Smith leadership was particularly noted for its success in building and maintaining significant polling leads for Labour over the Conservatives. A number of factors are particularly important in understanding how this occurred and, across all of them, Smith's parliamentary performance as leader is widely accredited as contributing to the growth of Labour's popularity among voters. Undeniably, the greatest single event affecting Labour's popularity occurred on 16th September 1992, following the government's surprise announcement that damaging international currency speculation had forced sterling to be withdrawn from the European exchange rate mechanism. Despite spending more the £2 billion in support of sterling that day, the Conservative front-bench denied that the events of 'Black Wednesday' were attributable to its own economic policies. By the end of September, Labour had accumulated a twenty-point polling lead over the government.

Labour's electoral popularity was further reinforced by the deep divisions inside the Conservative government concerning the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union. Although the Conservatives narrowly won the early votes on ratification in November 1992, they were subsequently defeated in March 1993 and again in July, when the government lost key divisions on the European Social Chapter. Smith also managed to exploit apparent reversals of government policy on taxation. The growing economic recession which followed the 1992 election forced the government to admit that it had raised the burden of tax by up to 7%, demonstrating that the Conservatives' election pledge to reduce taxation 'year-on-year' was unsustainable. Moreover, the attempt by the Major government to regain the political initiative by launching its 'Back-to-Basics' campaign of traditional moral values unleashed a number of damaging news stories detailing the private lives, peccadilloes, and financial impropriety of leading Conservative parliamentarians. In the event, a number of high-profile Tory MPs resigned their ministerial positions. The longer-term effect of this badly timed campaign was to create a media climate which unrelentingly sought 'bad news' stories about the government. Within months of the launch of 'Back-to-Basics', the full extent of scandal and 'sleaze' inside the Conservative Party was exposed. Among other stories, journalists uncovered gerrymandering and 'homes-for-votes' policies in the

Conservative-controlled Westminster City Council, arms sales to Iraq despite the moratorium on trade following the 1991 Gulf War, and evidence that Conservative MPs had accepted bribes in return for tabling parliamentary questions.

By May 1994, Labour had made significant inroads into reversing the pessimism produced by its 1992 defeat. In the long dark shadows cast by Black Wednesday, Labour had established itself as a credible future party of government. In the 1994 local elections, the Tories lost 400 councillors and relinquished control of 18 local authorities. Smith's attendance at a fundraising dinner on 11th May to celebrate Labour's gains was his last official duty as leader. Smith died of a heart attack the following morning. The contest for his successor began in earnest after Labour's spectacular victory in the European elections in June, and it quickly emerged that Tony Blair, the party's modernising home affairs spokesperson, was the likely front-runner.

One of the greatest assets of early 'Blairism' was that it combined the traditional and the radical – or, at least, it was designed as being seen to do so. Rather than a traditionalist in terms of Labour ideology, Blair cultivated a reputation (as Shadow Home Affairs spokesperson under Smith) for his strong sense of traditional community values. The new leader demonstrated a remarkable ability to encroach on the Conservatives' established law and order agenda, particularly by asserting that strong communities and social justice could not be achieved without being 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime'.⁵⁶ Equally, early Blairism was unwaveringly radical and modernising. Unlike his rivals, Blair owed no favours to the various factions inside his party. Blair's leadership statement clearly prioritised the need for further policy development, suggesting that 'our job is to honour the past not to live in it'. This indicated from the outset that Blair's New Labour 'project' intended to leave not a single ideological stone unturned. However, by outlining Labour's new ideological themes of community, opportunity, responsibility, fairness, trust and leadership, Blair sought to reassure the wider party that reform would serve only to reinforce Labour's traditional values. As Blair concluded shortly after his election, 'we haven't changed to forget our principles but to fulfil them, not to lose our identity but to keep our relevance'.⁵⁷ The New Labour initiative retained Labour's traditional emphases on equality, opportunity and

⁵⁶ Blair (1994), p.15

⁵⁷ LPACR (1994), p.105

community. It also sought to frame them within a radical policy agenda that blended together the various vote-winning aspects of Thatcherism, while simultaneously distancing the party from the vote-losing policy 'millstones' which characterised Labour's recent past.

New Labour is regularly criticised for having stolen the ideological clothing of the Conservative Party. In a number of areas of economic and social policy these claims may have credence. Blair's modernising agenda was heavily predicated on reassuring 'middle-income Britain' that Labour possessed the policies necessary to competently run an efficient economy. One particularly important device in reassuring voters involved Labour's gradual adoption of Conservative economics to replace the rather uncomfortable accommodations between demand and supply evident in the Policy Review. As Gordon Brown understood, a future Labour government would need to resolve two competing dilemmas. On one hand, the realities of globalisation heavily restricted government's ability to control capital, to direct investment, and to provide for full employment. On the other hand, the legacy of Thatcherism and the dislike of high taxation meant that future governments would be restricted in their pursuit of the redistribution of wealth. Brown further acknowledged that one of the most significant lessons of the 1992 defeat was that a future Labour government could no longer advance a 'tax-and-spend' programme. In a significant departure, both for the Labour Party and for electoral politics more generally, Brown announced shortly before the 1997 election that an incoming Labour government would adhere to Conservative spending limits. As David Blunkett proclaimed only weeks before the campaign, 'any government entering the twenty-first century cannot hope to create a more equal or egalitarian society simply by taking money from one set of people and redistributing it to others'.⁵⁸

In other areas New Labour adopted a range of policies designed to appeal directly to the middle-classes. Some policy initiatives represented significant ideological departures, especially in the social field. For instance, the 'New Deal' to tackle youth and long-term unemployment was a policy initiative concealing Labour's broader intent to reduce overall government welfare spending by establishing a proactive benefits system that 'encouraged' the unemployed back to work.⁵⁹ To fund these programmes, New Labour

⁵⁸ Blunkett cited in Seyd (1997), p.62

⁵⁹ Labour Party (1995d); Labour Party (1997d)

proposed to levy a one-off 'windfall tax' on the 'excess profits of the privatised utilities' to remarkable popular acclaim.⁶⁰

Across a range of other policy dimensions New Labour maintained much of the established agenda. In order to be 'tough on crime', New Labour proposed a range of punitive law and order measures designed to combat juvenile offending. Policy instruments included a range of zero tolerance measures for young offenders, such as youth curfews and community orders, but also included proposals to reform the youth justice system by awarding local authorities sweeping new powers in the prevention of repeated juvenile crime.⁶¹ The only significant deviation in New Labour's heavy anti-crime agenda involved the party's swift, thorough and sensitive reply to the Cullen public enquiry on the control of handguns following the murder of students at Dunblane Primary School in March 1996.⁶²

Likewise, New Labour's pledge to deliver a reduction in class sizes for all 5 to 7 year olds concealed broader acceptance of Conservative education policy. New Labour continued to support educational selection, grant-maintained schools, and the devolution of budgetary authority from local authorities to parents and governors. Labour also endorsed systems of Ofsted monitoring introduced by past Conservative governments, including regular pupil testing, the inspection of schools, and publication of performance league tables. Moreover, New Labour preserved Conservative policy for loan-based financing for students in higher and further education.⁶³

The New Labour project also relied upon the systematic downgrading of those vote-losing aspects of old Labour policy, particularly regarding nationalisation, European integration and defence. As discussed earlier, many of Labour's traditional commitments towards public ownership were excised under Kinnock's Policy Review. On becoming leader, Blair quickly recognised that Labour retained an outdated and anachronistic constitutional commitment to common ownership that could potentially militate against its long-term electoral advantage.⁶⁴ The repeal of Clause 4 might also generate good publicity. Labour had become 'a modern party living in an age of change' which required

⁶⁰ Labour Party (1997d), p.2

⁶¹ Labour Party (1996e)

⁶² Labour Party (1996b)

⁶³ Labour Party (1995b); Labour Party (1995c)

⁶⁴ Thompson (1995), p.3

‘a modern constitution that says what we are in terms the public cannot misunderstand and the Tories cannot misrepresent’.⁶⁵ The revision of Clause 4 was a symbolic act of New Labour’s preparedness to replace a long-held theoretical aspiration with a constitutional declaration of the practicalities of regulated market forces:

“...it does not follow that common ownership is our reflex answer to all market failures. The central question should be how we protect and advance the public interest in the efficient and equitable production and distribution of goods and services...we understand the weaknesses of the monolithic state corporations that have been typical of nationalised industries in the past...ownership is not the only way to advance our goals: regulation affects how markets operate”.⁶⁶

The revision of Clause 4 enabled Blair and Brown to legitimise the adoption of the Conservatives’ private-finance initiative (PFI), although they were careful to re-package it as ‘public-private partnerships’ (PPP). This was particularly evident with the publication of *A New Economic Future for Britain* in October, which was Labour’s first substantive economic policy document following the Clause 4 vote. As the statement concluded, PPP ‘means putting behind us the old battles [of] public versus private [and] state versus market’ in delivering a dynamic economy where ‘undertakings essential to the common good are either owned by the public or accountable to them’.⁶⁷ By demarcating certain projects to be of ‘vital national interest’, Labour sought to create an efficient administrative machine competent in managing large PPP projects like road or hospital building, while harnessing the support of the financial markets by taking greater account of ‘front-end risk’. PPP also sought to fund major public projects through the stimulation of private-sector investment with ‘calculable risk’ of over-run or overspend, alongside small amounts of ‘cash-limited’ government investment. The intention was to ensure that the public-sector could ‘correspond more closely to the form in which private investors are used to doing business’.⁶⁸ As Brown observed shortly before the 1997 election,

“...the public interest lies in promoting economic opportunity for all as the best guarantee of prosperity for our country...just as the public interest can be advanced by government, so too markets and competition are essential to opportunity. It was necessary therefore to transcend the old sterile debate between public and private – between nationalisation on the one hand and the dogma of privatisation on the

⁶⁵ LPACR (1994), p.106

⁶⁶ Labour Party (1994), pp.8-9

⁶⁷ Labour Party (1995a), p.4

⁶⁸ Labour Party (1995f), p.7

other...we have to examine how public and private sectors can work together to meet common objectives".⁶⁹

Labour's 1997 manifesto ruled out further extensions of public ownership. The party's policy directorate advised campaigners that returning the privatised utilities to public ownership 'would in itself do nothing to raise investment and improve the quality of service'.⁷⁰ Instead, New Labour contended that PPPs would provide the necessary investment and consumers would be better protected through wide-ranging powers of government enforcement. Labour's new thinking towards public ownership after 1995 had a visible impact on the ideological positioning of the party relative to its voting public. As we observed earlier, the Policy Review achieved limited success in realigning Labour policy with voter opinion. Table 1 below illustrates that, even after the 1992 defeat, most voters remained to the right of Labour on public ownership, suggesting that the party remained electorally vulnerable on this issue. But the repeal of Clause 4 made a much more immediate and substantive change and, by 1997, New Labour had positioned itself much closer to the median voter on this issue.

Year	Left of Labour	Same as Labour	Right of Labour	Net Balance
1983	8	13	78	+70
1987	12	17	70	+58
1992	17	23	59	+42
1994	17	24	58	+41
1997	26	34	40	+14

Table 1: Positioning of the electorate relative to the Labour Party on nationalisation and privatisation

(all figures are percentages)

Source: BES 1983-97, BEPS 1994; Heath (forthcoming, 2001). Reproduced with permission.

New Labour's defence and European policies were not altogether new either, since the Policy Review effected the most substantive reversals of policy on unilateralism, NATO and the European Community (see Tables 2 and 3). In these areas, Labour simply qualified and clarified existing priorities. For example, New Labour maintained the party's multilateral commitment to the eradication of nuclear weapons, first endorsed in 1989, and sought more generally to further the success of the Policy Review in delivering a defence programme more in tune with the priorities of the electorate. While clarifying its position on the maintenance of existing missile systems by committing Labour to the retention of Trident and Polaris, party leaders nevertheless declared that a future Labour government would pressurise the international community for an overall 'freeze on

⁶⁹ Labour Party (1997c).

⁷⁰ Labour Party (1997b), section 2.7.6

nuclear warhead numbers'.⁷¹ Likewise, by pledging to establish a strategic review of the funding of the defence industry, New Labour reinforced the desire of successive Labour leaders to reduce government spending on defence and security. Savings would be achieved in a number of ways. These included collaboration between government and civil markets to develop 'dual-use technologies' and encourage defence diversification, greater international collaboration inside NATO by sharing defence technology, and more extensive 'co-operation in a long-term partnership between government and industry' to enable forward planning of defence requirements.⁷²

Year	Left of Labour	Same as Labour	Right of Labour	Net Balance
1983	12	14	74	+62
1987	11	14	75	+64
1992	25	14	62	+37

Table 2: Positioning of the electorate relative to the Labour Party on nuclear weapons

(all figures are percentages)
(Data for 1994 and 1997 not available)
Source: BES 1983,1987, BEPS 1992; Heath (forthcoming, 2001). Reproduced with permission.

New Labour also retained the Policy Review’s commitments on European integration. By supporting the growth of the European single market, party leaders emphasised the need for Britain to build constructive working relationships with continental states to generate additional wealth and employment, as well to advance social rights and environmental protection. New Labour also appeared to identify with the growing public concern at the lack of accountability and transparency of European institutions, and Blair stressed Labour’s long-held desire to pursue the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the EU’s budgetary mechanisms.⁷³ But, by moving Labour closer to an overtly pro-European positioning, Blair ran counter to the emergent nationalism behind the Euro-scepticism of the New Right. As Table 3 illustrates, the Policy Review had a temporary balancing effect on the positioning of Labour relative to the electorate on this dimension (7%), but this effect disintegrated soon thereafter. In 1994, the ideological gap between Labour and the electorate was twice that of 1979, and in 1997 more than one-half of all voters continued to position themselves to the right of Labour on the European question (53%). Although New Labour remained at-odds with the electorate on these two key issues, its decisive victory in 1997 suggested that Blair’s approach to

⁷¹ Labour Party (1996a), p.14
⁷² Labour Party (1995g)
⁷³ Labour Party (1995h); Labour Party (1996d)

this dimension was, nevertheless, strategically compatible with the pursuit of post-Thatcherite economic policies elsewhere.

Year	Left of Labour	Same as Labour	Right of Labour	Net Balance
1979	31	26	43	+12
1992	36	21	43	+7
1994	26	23	51	+24
1997	19	27	53	+34

Table 3: Positioning of the electorate relative to the Labour Party on Europe

(all figures are percentages)

Source: BES 1979, 1992, 1997, BEPS 1994; Heath (forthcoming, 2001). Reproduced with permission.

In ideological terms, therefore, we should be extremely careful in our use of the term ‘New Labour’ to describe a wholeheartedly *new* Labour Party. Labour’s history during the twentieth century has revealed several identifiable phases of revisionist party leadership, and Blair’s New Labour is simply the latest example of such a phenomenon. Moreover, the ideological roots of many of New Labour’s policy instruments appeared to be firmly anchored with the reforms of the 1987-92 period. PPP was a logical extension of the Policy Review’s shift in thinking towards the state and the market. Similarly, the revision of Clause 4 in 1995 was a stylistic act to amend the party’s constitution to account for an earlier abandonment of public ownership and new ideological emphases on market regulation, accountability and consumer protection. Yet, in other areas of policy, New Labour stole the ideological clothing of the Conservatives. While New Labour pledged to deliver economic prudence through the maintenance of Conservative spending limits, it also retained much of the prevailing Thatcherite orthodoxy in the social field, especially towards crime and education. Instead, we should regard New Labour as a media brand designed to demarcate a competent, moderate and strong party of government from a weak, divisive and highly ideological party of opposition. Labour’s eventual landslide victory in 1997 owed much to the success of marketing the New Labour brand. Beneath the surface, however, we find that New Labour’s ideological platform was a rather uncomfortable juxtaposition between the various programmatic options imbued by the Policy Review and the vote-winning aspects of modern conservatism.

Ideological Transformation and the decline of curvilinear disparity

The extent of attitudinal congruence within political parties on substantive ideological and policy questions determines both overall party unity and, therefore, long-term electoral performance. Labour’s Policy Review after 1987, and the consolidation of

policy modernisation under New Labour, was designed to establish an electoral programme capable of finding greater levels of support among the voting public. To do so, it was vital for party leaders to minimise the extent of internal dissent within the party and to eliminate, as far as possible, any attitudinal asymmetry between voters and ordinary party members.

Attitudinal asymmetry is a phenomenon characteristic of many democratic political organisations. Ostrogorski observed that local associations in the nineteenth century Liberal Party displayed a propensity for radicalism, relative both to party leaders and the mass of voters who supported it. In particular, Ostrogorski identified that the radicalism and ideological inflexibility of party members and supporters caused the Liberals to take insufficient account of 'national idiosyncrasies' in political opinion. The result was the alienation of large numbers of voters and, therefore, electoral isolation. But attitudinal asymmetry is not a phenomenon confined to pre-war political parties. David Butler, V.O. Key and Maurice Duverger revealed the existence of attitudinal disparity between party leaders, activists and voters in post-war parties as well. As Butler concluded, party leaders were forced to endure significant strategic dilemmas since their 'most loyal and devoted of followers tend to have more extreme views' and appeared to be particularly 'removed from the mass of those who actually provide the vote'.⁷⁴

In 1973, an American political scientist published a systematic analysis of hierarchical attitudinal variations within political parties. John May's *Special Law of Curvilinear Disparity* reflected the established hypothesis that within modern political organisations there was an apparent tendency towards disaggregation between the moderate opinions of party leaders and voters on one hand, and the relative militancy and extremism of party activists on the other. May suggested that curvilinear disparity was so predominant that it had become 'the normal configuration' of politics within parties engaged in open 'electoral competition for governmental office'.⁷⁵ May contested that party leaders and non-leaders (voters and non-active supporters) displayed certain patterns of attitudinal congruence, whereas grassroots members and activists were 'substantive extremists' and had become 'estranged from public opinion at large'.

⁷⁴ Butler (1960), p.3

⁷⁵ May (1973), p.139

The theoretical propositions of May's model were reinforced by a number of surveys of political parties. For example, Janosik's study of Labour branch parties revealed that local officers held substantially radical opinions relative to incumbent local MPs. Epstein observed that local members more readily sanctioned breaches of leadership by left-wing MPs, whereas dissenting right-wing MPs were punished more severely. Similarly, Constantini and Eldersveld found that party activists in American parties held the strongest and most extreme attitudinal positions relative to their local leaders and electors.⁷⁶

There are several underlying explanations for the emergence of attitudinal asymmetry. First, curvilinear disparity may reflect prevailing balances of power within political parties. Party structures that provide for the accountability of leaders to rank-and-file members often encourage activists to deviate more readily from the median ideological positioning of the electorate. The existence of organisational structures, such as party congresses or conferences, at which the actions and policies of party leaders are routinely scrutinised by elected delegates, can propagate the growth of radicalism and dissent. Indeed, Labour's history has shown the party's annual conference to be the locus of some of the more bitter ideological disputes between activist delegates and the party leadership.

Second, the relatively free and unrestricted access of individuals to party membership means that the recruitment of radicals and extremists can proceed largely unchecked. As May acknowledged, the regulations determining eligibility of membership 'are scarcely more restrictive than the rules governing the eligibility to vote in a general election'. Since almost anyone can join the Labour Party, party leaders remain structurally incapable of preventing the 'infiltration' of radicals into local parties. The challenge for leadership is how best to ensure that membership recruitment delivers substantially more moderate new recruits than radicals.

Third, the political socialisation of party leaders reinforces the strategic importance of maintaining electorally moderate programmes to ensure the support of ordinary voters. But the voluntary nature of party membership means that political parties can often attract 'zealots in the party cause'. Only those most devout activists appear willing to

⁷⁶ Janosik (1968), especially ch.2; Epstein (1967); Constantini (1963); Eldersveld (1964), especially ch.8

engage in the mundane and routinised activities associated with campaigning and elections. Consequently, we find that some of Labour's most enthusiastic campaigners at the local level have also been those who have propounded fervently radical political opinions. Across a number of different dimensions, therefore, curvilinear disparity appears to be an intrinsic part of the internal life of modern political parties.

This section considers the prevalence of attitudinal asymmetry within the modern Labour Party, and assesses the relationship between the transformation of Labour policy and the structural propensity of its activist members to deviate from the median ideological positioning of Labour voters. The Labour Party of the late-1970s and early-1980s showed with remarkable clarity that there existed significant sections of the activist membership who held disproportionately extreme ideological positions. What was the effect of policy reform, and to what extent did party-level ideological transformation occur simultaneously with the reduction of attitudinal disparity between activists and voters? Were party members significantly less radical in the late-1990s, and how successful has New Labour been in narrowing the ideological 'gap' between its membership and the mass of its voting electorate?

The British Election Study series provided a useful source of data by which to evaluate these questions, especially in facilitating the quantification of trends in curvilinear disparity over time. Moreover, the BES is the only quantitative resource allowing for *direct* comparisons between the ideological positioning of party members and those of party voters. As well as establishing many of the causal determinants of voting, the BES questionnaires have asked respondents to detail party membership, and have also included a number of continuous and comparable attitudinal questions on a variety of class and valence issues. The BES remains the longest series of academic surveys in Britain, the fieldwork of which has taken place immediately following every general election since 1964. The BES series was originated by David Butler and Donald Stokes, and since 1983 it has been administered by Anthony Heath, John Curtice and Roger Jowell. The principal element of the BES surveys is the post-election cross-sectional survey. Since 1992 the cross-sectional study has been supplemented with annual data generated by the British Election Panel Study (BEPS). All surveys are conducted by probability sampling representative of the British electorate south of the Caledonian Canal (excluding Northern Ireland), and by face-to-face interviewing. The BES series is

especially noteworthy for the quality of its fieldwork. It also generates an abundance of quantitative electoral data on the socio-economic and occupational characteristics of British voters.

How can we use the BES surveys to quantify the extent of curvilinear disparity and measure change over time? The BES series provides only a small number of directly comparable measures of attitudinal change and, unfortunately, on several occasions the surveys failed to establish respondent membership of political parties. However, we can draw on a number of 'left-right' value items, as well as several questions relating to other valence issues. But our analysis is constrained to those years where the BES surveys identified the extent of party membership among voters – hence, the elections of 1964, 1970, October 1974, 1983, 1987, and 1997. Moreover, while some of the pre-1979 studies are not directly relevant to the particular focus of this Thesis, by reporting data across the 1964-97 period we can better assess the extent to which the Labour membership of the late-1990s is *comparably different* to before.

Measurements of attitudinal change along the left-right dimension are derived from four key variables relating to nationalisation and public ownership, the power of 'big business', the power of the trade unions, and the extent of conflict between the working and middle-classes. We can also draw on other valence issue variables, notably attitudinal data on nuclear weapons and unilateralism, redistribution of wealth, international aid, and European integration. Curvilinear disparity can be calculated through the observed differences between members and voters in their strength of agreement on these key attitudinal items. Disparity can be measured individually for each of these attitudinal variables, as well collectively through aggregate scores for all variables in each election. While the BES series allows us to report the levels of disparity for other major political parties, this should be the focus of further comparative research. The principal undertaking here is to quantify, as far as possible, the extent to which the foundations of New Labour were built on the successful narrowing of the ideological 'gaps' between party members and those Labour supporters who vote for it.

It is useful to begin our examination of the changing trends in curvilinear disparity by reviewing the existence of member-voter disparity along the classic social class (left-right) dimension. As Table 4 below illustrates, support among Labour members for an

extension of *public ownership* fell considerably after 1987. Whereas in 1964 almost two-thirds of members sought more nationalisation (63.2%) rather than less, by 1997 support for public ownership had fallen by around one-half (to 37.5%). Among Labour voters, the enthusiasm for public ownership has been traditionally much lower. Hence, average member-voter disparity between 1964 and 1987 was typically estimated at around 20% (except for 1983). Since 1987, however, the ideological gap between members and voters on public ownership has narrowed considerably. By 1997, there were virtually no identifiable differences between them (0.4%).

Secondly, there has been only a slight downward shift in the antipathy of party members towards the *power of commerce and big business* during the 1964-97 period, with around four-fifths of party members regarding big business to be too powerful. But, since 1974, there has been a significant increase in voter antipathy towards big business. As with public ownership, average member-voter disparity was narrowed in the late-1980s and 1990s. By the 1997 election there were hardly any apparent variations between them on this issue (0.7%).

Thirdly, the data revealed that party members supported powerful *trade unions* much more solidly than ordinary Labour voters. Although support for the unions declined substantially among members and voters during the decade of industrial strife in the 1970s, after 1987 the unions enjoyed a marked revival especially among Labour voters. By 1997, more than three-quarters of voters supported an extension of rights for the trade unions, effectively narrowing the ideological gap further. Between 1983 and 1997, disparity between members and voters on the union dimension fell sharply from 28.3% to only 8.6%.

Finally, the BES data highlighted the existence of sharp upturns in the perception among members and voters of *conflict* between the social classes. In 1964, one-in-two party members (53.7%) recognised inter-class conflict compared with two-fifths of voters (43.0%). By 1987, this rose to two-thirds and one-half respectively, such that member-voter disparity was estimated at around 15%. But the significant increase in voter perception of class conflict caused attitudinal disparity to be much lower during the 1990s. Party members long recognised the class-based implications of Thatcherism, as well as the misnomer of Major's 'classless society'. Voters now also appeared to share

this perspective. At the 1997 election, the differential between members and voters on this dimension had been reduced to five percent.

	1964	1970	1974 O	1983	1987	1997
<i>Nationalisation</i>						
Labour members	63.2		72.1	59.5	58.8	37.5
Labour voters	46.6		52.8	31.6	35.0	37.1
<i>Disparity</i>	<i>16.6</i>		<i>19.3</i>	<i>27.9</i>	<i>23.8</i>	<i>0.4</i>
<i>Business</i>						
Labour members	78.1	82.5	72.5	86.5		80.9
Labour voters	67.3	60.3	65.8	73.3		80.2
<i>Disparity</i>	<i>10.8</i>	<i>22.2</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>13.2</i>		<i>0.7</i>
<i>Trade Unions</i>						
Labour members	70.5	61.5	51.4	77.0		85.4
Labour voters	46.8	33.4	36.5	48.7		76.8
<i>Disparity</i>	<i>23.7</i>	<i>28.1</i>	<i>14.9</i>	<i>28.3</i>		<i>8.6</i>
<i>Class Conflict</i>						
Labour members	53.7	45.0			66.0	68.8
Labour voters	43.0	35.3			51.3	63.1
<i>Disparity</i>	<i>10.7</i>	<i>9.7</i>			<i>14.7</i>	<i>5.7</i>

Table 4: Curvilinear Disparity between Labour Party members and Labour voters on class variables 1964-97

(all figures are percentages)

N's for Labour members: 1964 (n=96), 1970 (40), 1974 Oct (70), 1983 (75), 1987 (54), 1997 (48)

N's for Labour voters: 1964 (n=626), 1970 (625), 1974 Oct (772), 1983 (865), 1987 (946), 1997 (1005)

Source: BES 1964-1997

The BES datasets also provided a number of other attitudinal items through which to assess curvilinear disparity and the extent of change over time, although on three of these variables we are constrained by irregular data. Table 5 illustrates that on key valence issue variables the disparities between members and voters were significantly lower in 1997 than in either 1983 or 1987. This further reinforced claims that New Labour members had assumed ideological positions much closer to ordinary mainstream Labour voters. Moreover, it is interesting to note that on two of these dimensions the de-radicalisation of party membership during the 1990s meant that Labour voters had actually begun to hold more radical political viewpoints.

Firstly, party members displayed a traditional ideological hostility towards *nuclear weapons*, and in 1987 there was a marked gulf between members and voters on the question of whether a future Labour government should cancel Britain's nuclear programme (24.7%). The end of the Cold War and the declining strategic importance of nuclear weapons brought about a sharp decay in anti-nuclear sentiment among party members. A similar proportion of Labour voters supported unilateralism in 1997 compared with a decade before, but among party members support for non-nuclear defence fell by around one-half. On the nuclear issue, therefore, the decade following Labour's 1987 defeat was one in which party leadership had appeared to eradicate curvilinear disparity completely.

The BES surveys also asked respondents to identify the importance of the redistribution of wealth and international aid. Both questions used Likert scaling, and the data contained in Table 5 refers to those respondents who thought redistribution and international aid to be ‘very important’ policy goals for government. Because the 1983 survey used slightly different question formats, the data for this year should not be directly compared with other years, albeit that the calculation of disparity is unaffected. The data identified similar trends among members and voters. In 1974, there was little substantive variation between them regarding the *redistribution of wealth*. But, in the 1980s, curvilinear disparity increased substantially, possibly because some Labour voters felt that redistribution might demand an additional burden of taxation. The ideological gap narrowed slightly in the 1990s, although at the 1997 election there remained a significant margin between the two groups (9.6%).

Similar trends are evident regarding *international aid* to developing countries. Although most members and voters tended not to prioritise this issue, party members felt particularly strongly in 1987, effecting a marked disparity score for that year. Ten years on, however, the enthusiasm of members towards international aid had waned. It also declined among voters as well. Whereas one-in-five party members regarded international development to be a very important issue in 1997, only one-in-twenty Labour voters thought so.

	1964	1970	1974	1983	1987	1997
<i>Nuclear Weapons</i>						
Labour members	8.4			61.3	57.4	29.2
Labour voters	15.2			47.3	32.7	29.9
<i>Disparity</i>	(6.8)			14.0	24.7	(0.7)
<i>Wealth</i>						
Labour members			39.1	81.1	33.3	38.8
Labour voters			38.5	74.8	20.9	28.7
<i>Disparity</i>			0.6	6.3	12.4	9.6
<i>Aid</i>						
Labour members			15.9		38.9	20.8
Labour voters			9.1		11.8	5.7
<i>Disparity</i>			6.8		27.1	15.1
<i>Europe</i>						
Labour members	41.5	57.5	56.7	44.6	37.0	16.7
Labour voters	32.1	57.6	54.0	31.9	39.8	25.2
<i>Disparity</i>	9.4	(0.1)	2.7	12.6	(2.8)	(8.5)

Table 5: Curvilinear Disparity between Labour Party members and Labour voters on policy variables 1964-97
(all figures are percentages)
Source: BES 1964-1997

Finally, party members and Labour voters have shown an historical scepticism towards further *European integration*. This trend was particularly evident in the 1970s – the decade

of entry, renegotiation and referendum – and the similarities of opinion between members and voters were reflected in low disparity scores. However, several interesting trends emerged after 1983. Firstly, whereas Labour voters became slightly more Euro-sceptic between 1983 and 1987, party members subsequently became more overtly pro-European. Under New Labour, party voters retained some scepticism on European issues, whereas grassroots members appeared to be more ardent enthusiasts. In a similar vein to the issue of nuclear weapons, party members appeared slightly more moderate on questions of European integration than ordinary mainstream Labour voters.

	Nat.	BB	TU	Conflict	Nuclear	Wealth	Aid	Europe	Average (change)
1964	16.6	10.8	23.7	10.7	-6.8			9.4	10.7
1970		22.2	28.1	9.7				-0.1	14.9 (+4.2)
1974	19.3	6.7	14.9			0.6	6.8	2.7	8.5 (-6.4)
1983	27.9	13.2	28.3		14.0	6.3		12.6	17.0 (+8.5)
1987	23.8			14.7	24.7	12.4	27.1	-2.8	16.6 (-0.4)
1997	0.4	0.7	8.6	5.7	-0.7	9.6	15.1	-8.5	3.8 (-12.8)

Table 6: Summary – curvilinear disparity scores by general election
(all figures are percentages)
Source: BES 1964-97

In short, the decade of Labour’s ideological transformation saw significant reductions in the prevalence of curvilinear disparity between grassroots members and the Labour electorate. As Table 6 above illustrates, across all of the eight variables considered in our analysis, the extent of member-voter attitudinal disparity was substantially lower in 1997 than in either 1983 or 1987. In fact, the average disparity score in 1997 was lower than for any other BES survey. Moreover, the trends in disparity reinforce our broad historical understanding of Labour’s recent electoral history. Disparity was at its highest (in 1983) at a time when Labour emerged from an intensive period of factionalism only to greet its greatest ever election defeat. Similarly, low disparity scores (say $\leq 11\%$) seem to be strongly associated with Labour election victories (i.e. in 1964, 1974 and 1997). Although our analysis is restricted to the continuous attitude variables and to those BES surveys quantifying party membership among voters, the trends in disparity are particularly suggestive. Labour’s ideological transformation occurred simultaneously with the realignment of opinion among both grassroots members and party voters. Of course, it is unlikely that the process of ideological transformation *itself* caused such structural shifts, rather that they were the function of external ideological factors occurring in wider political society. What we can identify, however, is that New Labour’s landslide victory in

May 1997 owed much to the ideological realignment of the party and its grassroots membership in closer proximity to its voting public.⁷⁷

This chapter has highlighted the importance of party-level ideological transformation in helping us to understand the decline of the Labour Left during the late-1980s and 1990s. Ideological reform is significant in two key respects. First, the *breadth* of policy transformation created a fundamentally different ideological ‘playing field’ to which the groups of the Labour Left were forced to align. Labour’s new ideological agenda altered the platform on which Labour Left groups competed for support among grassroots activists, especially in those areas of policy which tended to generate strong intra-party attitudinal conflicts. By abandoning Labour’s traditional orthodoxy towards, for example, public ownership, state-market relations, further European integration and nuclear disarmament, party leaders established for themselves a new ideological framework which rendered many of the traditional socialist policies of the Left as anachronistic and electorally irreconcilable. Party-level ideological transformation appeared to exacerbate the fragmentation of the Labour Left. The emergence of strategic coalitions between party leaders and the soft-left, especially after 1987, reinforced localised tensions between the various groups and personalities of the Left. While New Labour did not necessarily represent anything significantly ‘new’ in ideological terms, its consolidation and extension of past reforms served only to further cement the isolation of the Left from mainstream policy-making.

Party-level ideological transformation also proved important in the extent of its *depth* of penetration among party members and ordinary Labour voters. This chapter has posited that one important measure of the depth of ideological change is provided by the calculation of observed differences in the attitudes of party members relative to party voters. There is particularly strong evidence to suggest that the marginalisation of the Labour Left occurred simultaneously with the narrowing of member-voter attitudinal disparity. The BES data also revealed that, since the early-1990s, Labour has become a

⁷⁷ These findings reinforce the conclusions of recent research by Paul Webb and David Farrell who observed that party members had shifted dramatically to the right on social class and liberty-authority issues (significant at 0.05 level), as well as becoming more overtly pro-European over time. See Webb and Farrell (1997)

party with an observably de-radicalised grassroots membership where, on a number of key issues, the ideological positioning of party members has shifted much closer to that of mainstream voters. While the reduction in ideological heterogeneity among party supporters may provide one causal explanation for Labour's eventual landslide victory in 1997, it also powerfully suggests that the contemporary Labour Party lacks one of the primary structural elements necessary for factionalised responses to intra-party conflict.

4

Ideological Transformation and the Labour Left

The decade following Labour's third election defeat in 1987 represented an age of critical ideological realignment at the party-level. Never before had a British political party so thoroughly and exhaustively reassessed its programmatic commitments especially, as the previous chapter highlighted, on important policy questions surrounding the public ownership of industry, state-market relations, European integration, unilateralism and defence policy. The platform on which New Labour stood before the British electorate in the spring of 1997 bore little, if any, resemblance to the manifesto on which (Old) Labour campaigned so ineffectively only fifteen years before.

But many grassroots party members were enthusiastic sponsors of Labour's 1983 programme and it was a manifesto for government which the Labour Left publicly endorsed and championed. An important question to consider, therefore, is the extent to which the groups of the Labour Left responded to party-level ideological shifts by tempering their own commitments over time. Are we able to observe parallel processes of policy moderation among the various groups of the Left after 1983? To evaluate this question, this chapter considers the response of three groups to Labour's policy transformation. This chapter discusses policy shift *across* the spectrum of Left opinion, ranging from the broad soft-left coalition spearheaded by Tribune, to the Bennite-left Campaign Group, and beyond to the revolutionary-socialist Militant Tendency. Did the groups of the Left respond to the changing ideological climate inside the Labour Party by moderating their own policies towards, for example, public ownership, state intervention, European integration and nuclear disarmament? Or did they reject the temperance of party policy by retaining distinctively radical programmes, a strategy that would further alienate and disengage them from party leaders and the 'mainstream' of ordinary Labour voters?

Most importantly, the key question to consider is whether the decline of the Labour Left after 1983 involved *across-the-board* losses in ideological distinctiveness among its groups, or whether Labour's Policy Review had a peculiarly 'fragmenting' effect because it was reinforced by some constituent elements of the Left but not others.

Tribune: the soft-left and policy transformation

Since the 1960s, the Tribune movement has included the 'loose and amorphous' organisation of the Tribune Group of Labour MPs at the parliamentary level, as well as the weekly newspaper that shared its name (est. 1937) designed for a broad left-wing readership predominantly of party members and trade unionists. Although the Tribune Group acted as an inclusive umbrella movement for the parliamentary Labour Left, it avoided operating as an intra-party faction and, consequentially, Tribune did not issue binding instructions to its members on the basis of a clear statement of aims and values. Similarly, there are no complete records of Group deliberations. As Seyd suggested, the most effective measure by which we can differentiate Tribune Group policy from that of the Labour front-bench requires examination of specific instances of parliamentary dissent, notably in speeches, amendments or Early Day Motions.¹ But this method seems more applicable to discussions of dissent when Labour is in government rather than when it is in opposition. Aside from systematic analysis of the homogeneity of the PLP in recorded votes, we can also consider the changing ideological priorities of the Tribune soft-left through the published articles and editorials of prominent sympathisers ('Tribunites') in the *Tribune* newspaper itself. Since the Group typically evaluated party policy on the basis of consensual and non-binding agreements, the newspaper provided more thorough expositions of how the ideological priorities of leading Tribunes differed substantively from the thinking of the front-bench leadership.

One of the most important economic questions to occupy the minds of Tribunes, and the Left in general, concerned the adoption of Labour's Alternative Economic Strategy. As *Tribune* suggested, leading Tribunes were 'at the forefront' of developing an alternative economic 'consensus' inside the party which was designed to address the challenges posed by the decline of Keynesianism and the emergence of neo-liberal

¹ Seyd (1987), p.78

monetarism.² As discussed earlier, the AES emerged out of Labour's NEC policy-making committees during the early-1970s. The AES was endorsed at the party conference in 1973, and later published as part of *Labour's Programme 1973*. The content of the strategy was revised over time, particularly in light of the economic crises that haunted the Wilson and Callaghan governments. The AES was re-published as part of *Labour's Programme 1976*, although ministers chose to ignore many of its key objectives during the remaining years of the administration.

Following Labour's 1979 defeat, the Tribune alliance sought to re-invigorate the AES both as a bulwark to Thatcherite monetarism and to fill the growing ideological vacuum evident in Labour's economic and industrial policy. Tribunites published articles declaring their support for an alternative economic approach, and a number of Tribune MPs co-authored pamphlets with colleagues from the Labour Co-ordinating Committee acknowledging that an alternative strategy provided an essential 'framework for transforming the way our economy works'.³ As Tony Milward suggested,

"One of the results of the attention given by Tribune and by other sections of the Labour movement is that it is now commonplace to speak of "the" Alternative Economic Strategy, and this reflects a real consensus on the main lines of policy that must be pursued if the economic crisis is to be resolved in the interest of working people".⁴

The AES sought to pursue four general and interdependent goals. First, economic growth as the 'sole means' of achieving full employment, particularly through public investment in key industrial sectors, education, health and other social services. Second, the introduction of import controls on foreign trade to shelter the domestic economy from 'the workings of the international market and multinational companies'. Third, the development of a new industrial strategy to regulate public and private investment through compulsory planning agreements between managers, trade unions and government. Fourth, the introduction of price controls to limit monopoly power and to control inflation. The AES was designed as a complete package and 'taken individually each of the policies would probably be unworkable'.⁵ The interdependency of the AES's

² Tribune 12.09.80

³ Labour Co-ordinating Committee (1980), p.3

⁴ Tribune 26.09.80; 19.03.82

⁵ Tribune 26.09.80

key policy instruments was what defined it as being truly alternative since 'each element of the strategy depends on the others - a boost to the economy through public expenditure will achieve little without trade controls and industrial intervention'.⁶

The strategy was kept alive following Labour's defeat in May 1979 because its most ardent enthusiasts continued to occupy important seats of power. Support was most heavily concentrated in those areas of policy-making where the Labour Left enjoyed their most significant leverage, especially within the National Executive Committee and its nexus of economic and industrial sub-committees.⁷ Crucially, some of the leading Tribunes involved in the early formulation of the strategy in 1972-3 continued at the centre of economic policy-making following Labour's 1979 defeat, including Stuart Holland, Judith Hart, Margaret Beckett, Michael Meacher and Eric Heffer. The Labour Party's own research staff also gave vital official support for the strategy, and ensured that many of its principles were carried forward into key policy documents in advance of the 1983 election.⁸ However, following the re-endorsement of the AES in *Labour's Programme 1982*, the influence of the Labour Left over economic policy began to wane. John Golding replaced Tony Benn as chair of the important NEC Home Policy sub-committee, responsible for the drafting of the 1982 Programme. But, in the short-term, the gradual realignment away from the Left after 1982 made little substantive impact on the Labour Party's established economic commitments and its programme for the forthcoming election.

Labour's systematic support for the AES played a significant part in explanations for its spectacular defeat in 1983. As Wickham-Jones suggested, the scale of defeat immediately 'removed the possibility of the AES being implemented'.⁹ Following the election, the new leadership gradually disengaged from the AES's underlying principles and, in reply, some Tribunes began to consider less rigid forms of public ownership. Tribune reflected the wider debate occurring inside the Labour Party itself regarding new forms of public ownership to replace the traditional yet out-dated Morrisonian model. As party leaders re-evaluated their commitments towards nationalisation, much of the Tribune

⁶ Labour Co-ordinating Committee (1980), p.4

⁷ for a discussion of the Left's control over economic policy-making between 1979 and 1982 see Wickham-Jones (1996), esp. p.167-8

⁸ Labour Party (1982b)

⁹ Wickham-Jones (1996), p.184

soft-left openly considered the advantages of alternative approaches. In place of the conventional model of public ownership, Tribunites advanced ideas for equity stake-holding and employee share ownership, and emphasised the important role in investment which could be played by new 'state-holding companies' like the National Investment Bank and the British Investment Board.

"The notion that we have to take over a whole industry...seems to me to be out of date...We have in the past got too committed to the Morrisonian, centralised, bureaucratic institution...we are looking at a multi-faceted approach to the extension of public ownership, getting away from the rigid bureaucratic image and seeing public and social ownership as a much more flexible and adventurous tool than it has been before".¹⁰

Although much of the Labour Left were initially sceptical towards the party leadership's new thinking, Tribunites gradually borrowed the softer language used by leaders on questions of public ownership. *Tribune* acknowledged that public ownership had become much less of an immediate priority for future Labour governments. Peter Hain suggested that

"[we] should start delivering things quickly in those areas where [we] can actually do so. For example, it is crucial that the government goes for control of the economy...rather than getting bogged down at the beginning in extending public ownership which, although it must be done, will be more a medium-term objective".¹¹

Tribune's re-launch statement in September 1985 declared that 'economic power must be made publicly accountable through an extension of social ownership'.¹² The following month, Hugh Macpherson acknowledged that social ownership (particularly employee share ownership) could help to undermine Thatcherism as 'an attractive instrument' of wider social transformation:

"...the Morrisonian model may not apply to all enterprises and may have exhausted its usefulness in some parts of the economy...The radical response could be to take the chimerical claim to its true logical conclusion and extend greatly not absentee share ownership but employee share ownership...Apart from the intrinsic merit of the idea, it has many tactical attractions since it challenges Thatcherism at a very vulnerable point, and makes a form of nationalisation (by buying in the shares for the workforce) eminently presentable".¹³

¹⁰ *Tribune* 08.11.85

¹¹ *Tribune* 26.09.85

¹² *Tribune* 20.09.85

¹³ *Tribune* 25.10.85

Tribune's support for social ownership symbolised the extent to which the soft-left had begun to more easily coalesce with Labour's parliamentary leadership. Shortly before the 1986 conference, at which the Smith-Blunkett social ownership proposals were endorsed, Tribune indicated its support for a revision in policy. In September 1986, the newspaper reprinted a document, previously published by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, in which it proposed an alternative 'blueprint' for a future Labour government that Tribunites could readily 'endorse'. Tribune declared the importance of providing for '[an] extension of social ownership with the government taking a stake – whether full or partial ownership – in the major industrial and financial sectors of the economy in order to invest in, restructure and modernise Britain's industrial system'.¹⁴

Tribune contended that Labour's new proposals on industrial ownership might have the desired effect of strategically 'wrong-footing' the Conservative government in the long-term. In assessing the media impact of Labour's proposals, Tribune revealed that some centre-right newspapers had been 'unusually restrained' in their critiques of social ownership, and that the 'discomfiture of the financial press exhibits how nicely the proposals have combined electoral tactics and a long-term socialist economic strategy'. As Macpherson concluded, Labour's new thinking on industrial ownership displayed both an 'intrinsic merit' and a 'merchantable quality in electoral terms'.¹⁵

The response of Tribune to Labour's defeat in 1987 was to quickly apportion blame on party leaders for failing to adequately construct a 'political and ideological basis of an economic programme'.¹⁶ Although Tribunites endorsed the backbone of the social ownership proposals, they felt that some of the Labour's election commitments, especially towards the partial re-nationalisation of British Telecom and other utilities, were 'ill thought-out and governed solely by short-term considerations'. More importantly, they contended that Labour's economic policies lacked voter credibility, and that the key objective for the Left was to acknowledge its responsibility by renewing 'the best elements of an alternative economic strategy'. Paul Thompson, chair of the LCC, further observed that social ownership and the ideological acceptance of a mixed

¹⁴ Tribune 12.09.86

¹⁵ Tribune 12.09.86

¹⁶ Tribune, 04.03.88

economy were juxtaposed against Labour's 'paper commitment to public ownership'. Thompson concluded that,

"...by recognising a genuine role for private enterprise and markets, we could enthusiastically push for a much expanded and differently run public sector. But we have to make clear that we are in favour of a qualitatively different sort of mixed economy, in which new forms of social ownership, control and planning would be dominant".¹⁷

Nonetheless, by acknowledging the merits of social ownership, the mixed economy and a 'genuine role' for the private sector in the functioning of the economy, *Tribune* revealed the vast policy distances it had travelled in just five years. No longer did the Tribunate soft-left retain its 'chimerical' ideological adherence to the underlying principles of the AES, particularly to the 'commanding heights' of the British economy run by large nationalised industries of the kind envisaged by past Labour governments and to the 'isolationist' instruments of import and credit controls. By displaying the capacity to temper its thinking on a range of important economic and industrial questions, the soft-left *Tribune* movement demonstrated its willingness to constructively engage in strategic coalitions led by party leaders to refashion Labour's policy commitments and to widen the party's electoral appeal.

The Labour Left historically displayed particular antipathy towards the maintenance of an independent British nuclear deterrent as part of the NATO alliance. *Tribune* regularly declared the need for reductions in defence spending and the pursuit of non-nuclear defence policies. In 1980, Geoffrey Sinclair confidently predicted that within four years Labour's stance towards unilateralism and its commitment to withdraw from the EEC would become its most significant electoral 'trump cards'.¹⁸ Similarly, before the 1983 election, several leading Tribunites joined with other parliamentary colleagues to oppose leadership plans to scale-down Labour's manifesto commitments to unilateralism and the closure of American air force bases in Britain. The most urgent goal for Tribunites was to ensure that the sentiments of resolutions agreed at the 1982 conference were allowed to go forward into the manifesto, ensuring that Labour pledged 'an unequivocal,

¹⁷ *Tribune* 04.03.88

¹⁸ *Tribune* 10.10.80

unambiguous commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament'.¹⁹ In the event, however, Sinclair could not have been proved more wrong. Labour's critics heavily repudiated its non-nuclear policy and, after the election, unilateral disarmament was quickly identified as one of the most important explanations for Labour's defeat. But these assessments of Labour's emergent unelectability did not extinguish Tribune's enthusiasm for unilateralism. As Gavin Strang proposed in October 1983,

"The Labour Party must undertake an extensive campaign of political education to repudiate the allegation that the unilateral renunciation of nuclear weapons would leave Britain defenceless. Labour must also develop a non-nuclear policy which will demonstrate to the electorate that we have a positive strategy to achieve our declared goal – a defence system which does not rely on the possession of nuclear weapons".²⁰

The new leadership team under Kinnock and Hattersley began to reconsider Labour's existing defence policy, a process that culminated in the publication of *Defence and Security for Britain* in 1984. The Tribune Left remained deeply sceptical as to the gradual shift in thinking on defence at the party-level. Tribune concluded that any savings from the cancellation of nuclear programmes by a future Labour government would be 'eaten up' by commitments to increase the funding of conventional armed forces. Mark Crail predicted that this policy would have the effect of 'leaving Britain's defence spending well above that of its European allies'.²¹ In reply, *Tribune* reasserted the primacy of Labour's defence commitments as espoused in the party's 1983 manifesto, calling for 'a non-nuclear defence policy with the cancellation of Trident, the ejection of Cruise missiles, closure of American bases, and de-commissioning of Polaris'.²² Even at the height of the Policy Review in 1988-9, *Tribune* continued to advocate the importance of retaining unilateralist approaches to nuclear defence. Jos Gallacher identified in November 1988 that there were a number of reasons to oppose the leadership's policy shift by endorsing the existence of 'a pragmatic case for sticking with the present non-nuclear defence policy'. Drawing on survey evidence gathered shortly after the 1987 defeat, Gallacher reported that only 7% of non-Labour voters cited defence policy as their main reason for not supporting Labour. Moreover, the issue of American bases had become more significant over time, especially following the bombing of Tripoli on 15th

¹⁹ composite motion on unilateralism agreed by 4,927,000 to 1,975,000 votes; see LPACR (1982), pp.117-9, 136; Tribune 11.02.83

²⁰ Tribune 21.10.83

²¹ Tribune 04.10.85

²² Tribune 12.09.86

April 1986. The effect was to consolidate a shift in electoral support for unilateralism, rising from 19% in 1983 to 28% by 1986.²³ Policy reversals on defence and unilateralism, Gallacher suggested, ‘will not significantly boost Labour’s vote’ in the long-term and, hence, the Tribune Left should support a campaign for the retention of ‘the present policy of a non-nuclear Britain within NATO’.²⁴

The first apparent change in Tribune’s stance towards defence policy occurred in January 1989 when the Tribune Group of Labour MPs discussed a paper written by ex-CND chair, Joan Ruddock. This paper was later forwarded as a Tribune submission to the NEC’s policy review group on defence and foreign affairs. When Tribune members considered the Ruddock paper they requested the inclusion of a ‘multilateral option’, whereby British nuclear weapons would be removed through ‘negotiated agreements’ either as part of future arms reduction talks or through bilateral negotiations with the Soviet government.²⁵ This served as a particularly significant departure. For the first time, the Tribune movement indicated that it was prepared to reinforce policy shifts at the party-level by considering multilateralism to replace those perceivably outdated commitments to unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The ranks of Tribune and the soft-left reinforced the broad opposition shown by much of the Labour Left towards questions of closer European political and economic integration. The Euro-scepticism of the Left originated, in part, through fears that further political integration would undermine the democratic accountability of national parliaments and elected politicians. Economic integration would also restrict future Labour governments from pursuing the principal objectives of an alternative economic strategy. As Barrie Sherman concluded,

“We will need to leave the EEC as quickly as is practicable, as the [alternative economic] strategy is neither compatible with the Treaty of Rome or subsequent laws and nor is it

²³ Labour Party (1988b) - 10% of ex-Labour voters cited defence policy as their main reason for not voting Labour in 1987; see also Heath, Jowell and Curtice (1991)

²⁴ Tribune 11.11.88

²⁵ Tribune 27.01.89

possible to work within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy and other high cost barriers”.²⁶

The emergence of mass unemployment and high inflation during the 1970s and early-1980s suggested to Tribunites that economic recovery could not be achieved while the UK remained part of the EEC. To combat inflation and balance of trade deficits, Tribune sought to impose import controls to regulate the domestic economy, irrespective that the pursuit of such policies would render a future Labour government in direct contravention with the Treaty of Rome (1957). John Silkin claimed that the protection of key sectoral industries like shipbuilding, steel, coal and textiles demanded government controls over imports, acknowledging that such a policy ‘runs counter to the rules of the Common Market’.²⁷ Bryan Gould postulated a number of important themes underpinning Tribune’s Euro-scepticism:

“What, for example, are we to do about the enormous trade gap in manufactured goods which has opened up between ourselves and the Original Six over the past eight years? What about the outflow of desperately needed investment? What about the destruction of the British fishing industry? What about our inability to defend ourselves in economic terms because the weapons we might use...[are] outside the terms of EEC-agreed arrangements? We must expose...the real damage which EEC membership has inflicted...”²⁸

Tribune readily identified with Labour’s policy of withdrawal from Europe, first agreed at the 1980 party conference by a majority of more than 3 million votes. As one *Tribune* editorial observed, ‘every moment Britain remained in the EEC made it more difficult for Labour to build the sort of society that the Labour movement wanted’.²⁹ Gould reiterated that EEC membership ‘exploits our current loss of national self-confidence’. Labour’s should present a strong and positive case for withdrawal on the grounds that, in the longer-term, it would result in the ‘opening not the closing of doors’ to international trade.³⁰ The structural inefficiencies of Europe’s Common Agricultural Policy further cemented Tribune’s opposition to further integration. In criticising the Conservatives’ decision not to pursue reform of the CAP in 1981-2, *Tribune* suggested that British voters

²⁶ Tribune 19.03.82

²⁷ Tribune 29.02.80

²⁸ Tribune 23.05.80

²⁹ Tribune 03.10.80

³⁰ Tribune 24.10.80

paid higher prices and taxes to support an ‘absurd and discredited system’.³¹ Jack Straw concluded that

“...the European Community would not permit us to take the measures necessary to restore our economic health, would not give us that temporary respite from the rigours of international competition. That convinces us of the need for disengagement from the Community as it presently operates”.³²

The Labour Left was remarkably successful in influencing Labour’s policy towards withdrawal after 1980, but some Tribunites became concerned that party leaders had softened their stance. Michael Foot implied during a *Tribune* interview that Labour policy rested only on an ‘obligation to *discuss* [withdrawal] with our socialist partners in Europe’.³³ As the 1983 election neared, Tribune sought reassurances that a future government would make an early decision on withdrawal. Austin Mitchell complained that the manifesto blandly sought ‘negotiated’ withdrawal during ‘the lifetime of a Labour government’. Mitchell further suggested that the European question had become ‘like divorce – the quicker the better’ for all parties involved.³⁴

After Labour’s defeat in 1983, Tribunites began to disengage from past commitments towards withdrawal. At the post-election conference, the new leadership team suggested that Labour should ‘retain the option of withdrawal’ rather than pledging out-right that a future government would instantly halt further integration.³⁵ The extent of unity with party leaders on the European question was evident in the re-launch issue of *Tribune* published in September 1985. The editorial board echoed much of the leadership’s 1983 interim statement on Europe by repeating that ‘Britain must retain the option of withdrawal from the EEC’. Nigel Williamson’s interview with Kinnock showed that there was some degree of harmony between the Tribunate soft-left and party leaders:

“Williamson: Moving on to the EEC, is it now your view that we cannot go into an election with a policy of straight withdrawal?

Kinnock: I don’t think we would convince anyone if we did. There is great antagonism to the Common Market for good reasons which I share. But that antagonism does

³¹ Tribune 13.02.81

³² Tribune 13.11.81

³³ Tribune 12.02.82 – author’s emphasis

³⁴ Tribune 08.04.83

³⁵ Labour Party (1983a)

plainly not reflect itself at the ballot box. That is why I think that the current party policy of regarding withdrawal as a last option is a much more convincing policy”.³⁶

Following the re-launch, attention shifted away from the question of European integration. In September 1986, *Tribune* endorsed a detailed policy document published by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee which suggested key themes for Labour’s next election manifesto. The document ignored the issue of European integration, and confined its European policy to the rather narrow commitment to extend ‘nuclear-free zones’ across the continent.³⁷

After the 1987 general election, *Tribune*’s ambivalence rapidly ceded to an emergent enthusiasm for closer European co-operation and, in this respect, *Tribune* appeared to mirror the moderation of policy at the party-level. Although Labour’s policy shift on Europe was heavily influenced by renewed Euro-scepticism inside the Conservative government, *Tribune* recognised that the new realities of globalisation implied that ‘only by acting as part of Europe can Britain have any influence over the world order’. The soft-left prioritised the improvement of democratic accountability by European institutions to their national electorates. As Frances Morrell concluded,

“The economic unification of Western Europe is taking place without the parallel development of the means of political management...market forces should be subject to democratic control and that through the ballot box ordinary people can exert some control over their environment and lives”.³⁸

As Labour began to engage in more ‘constructive’ European policies, some Tribunites emphasised the importance of co-operation with other European socialist parties ‘to challenge the power of multinational capital’ by making the Commission’s single market project as politically and economically accountable as possible. Jos Gallacher poignantly argued in an article which pictured a waving Gorbachev above the caption ‘Farewell Cold War’, that the Left needed to ‘abandon the myth of socialism in one country’. In place of Atlanticist conceptions of integration, Gallacher stressed the need for ‘our own vision of Europe beyond the superpower blocs’. Gallacher posited that the theoretical dilemma for anti-Europeans was ‘how the nation state can independently sustain a health economy

³⁶ *Tribune* 20.09.85

³⁷ *Tribune* 12.09.86

³⁸ *Tribune* 21.10.88

while challenging the privileges of capital'.³⁹ Bryan Gould contended that the European single market would reduce the power of nation states and, therefore, the challenge for future Labour governments was how to 'ingeniously' work with European institutions to oppose forms of supra-national legislation that were irreconcilable with Labour's economic and social objectives:

"It is the Labour Party's task to identify those issues on which we should be making common cause with our European partners, without losing sight of the fact that our fundamental purpose is to ensure that market forces serve rather than damage the interests of ordinary people".⁴⁰

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the end of the Cold War, and significant swings to Labour in the 1989 European elections, suggested to the soft-left that there were a number of positive effects of closer European integration. As Macpherson suggested, British voters understood that 'coming out of Europe was unworkable'.⁴¹ *Tribune* responded to the NEC's statement on Europe, published in December 1990, by claiming that it 'should have been bolder' in its pro-European stance. Only by working within confederations of European socialist parties could Labour ensure that Europe was governed by 'those who are selected and accountable'.

"There are no votes in isolationism any more, nothing to be gained from clinging to the old notions of sovereignty...Why should Labour not advocate that as soon as possible, economic and monetary union should be followed by political union, by a federal state?...A European state will be with us sooner than we think. Do we really intend to play a leading part in the new post-cold war Europe?"⁴²

International currency speculation after the 1992 election induced a momentary re-opening of Tribune debate on European policy. The repercussions of Black Wednesday and the collapse of the European exchange rate mechanism in September 1992 suggested to soft-leftists that European socialists could only provide full employment, high growth, environmental protection and social rights by open and transparent decision-making at the supra-national level. Gould concluded that Black Wednesday enabled the Left 'to celebrate a great vindication of our views', and provided powerful instruments in the on-

³⁹ Tribune 09.12.88

⁴⁰ Tribune 03.03.89

⁴¹ Tribune 25.05.90

⁴² Tribune 14.12.90

going debate surrounding the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union.⁴³ The sterling crisis also undermined arguments for economic union, since a ‘monetary policy decided by the Bundesbank in German interests’ would not ‘automatically be appropriate to the needs of very different economies’ elsewhere.⁴⁴ Peter Hain suggested that

“The democratic-socialist agenda should be pro-European. Britain’s future lies in the EC. But the Left must promote policies geared to full employment, growth, high welfare provision and democratic accountability: Labour must vote against Major’s Maastricht Bill. Apart from excluding the treaty’s social chapter, it enforces a monetarist economic framework”.⁴⁵

Labour leaders did not share his view. Gordon Brown asserted that the sterling crisis reinforced ‘the case for greater co-operation on employment and industrial measures rather than for less’.⁴⁶ However, the resurgence of division between Tribune and the Labour front-bench was masked by the leadership’s decision to vote against Maastricht, albeit as a parliamentary tactic to ‘flush out the real extent of Tory back-bench rebellion’ rather than reflecting an ideological opposition to political and economic union.⁴⁷ The deepest divisions were confined to the ranks of the European parliamentary party. Following the decision of the Westminster Tribune Group to endorse an anti-Maastricht pamphlet written by four leading Tribune MPs, the Tribune MEPs in Brussels agreed to suspend their membership of the Group.⁴⁸ After the heat of the Maastricht ratification crisis had passed, Tribune’s policy of constructive engagement was reasserted. Tribune continued to acknowledge that Britain’s economic and political future lay with Europe. The challenge for the soft-left was how best to ensure that British interests (and those of future Labour governments) were served in an enlarged European Union run by democratically accountable institutions, furthering policies for the improvement of living and working conditions of ordinary people.

⁴³ Tribune 25.09.92

⁴⁴ Tribune 18.12.92

⁴⁵ Tribune 25.09.92

⁴⁶ Tribune 25.09.92

⁴⁷ Tribune 30.10.92

⁴⁸ ‘The Left in Europe’ was co-authored by Roger Berry, Derek Fatchett, Peter Hain and George Howarth; see Tribune 18.09.92

In these three key areas of policy, therefore, the soft-left Tribune movement responded significantly and comprehensively to the moderation of policy occurring at the party-level by re-shaping its own programmatic commitments. In several respects, the soft-left visibly *mirrored* policy developments spearheaded by Kinnock and his front-bench team. Tribune departed from the traditional orthodoxy surrounding nationalisation and public ownership by appreciating the significance of market forces and the importance of looser forms of social ownership. Tribune also acknowledged that defence and security policy need not be framed exclusively in terms of unilateralist options, and that Britain could work multilaterally with its allies to achieve global disarmament. Similarly, Tribune embraced Labour's more constructive pro-European agenda and, despite a temporary resurgence of anti-European sentiment following the climactic events of 1992-3, abandoned withdrawal in favour of continued partnership. These group-level shifts in thinking may explain why Tribune and the soft-left became so significant to party leaders in reinforcing Labour's systematic long-term review of policy.

The Campaign Group: the hard-left and policy transformation

The (Socialist) Campaign Group of Labour MPs has also avoided regular publication of clearly-delineated ideological statements, and has tended to couch their policy options in a language suitable enough to avoid accusation of organised factional disloyalty to the electoral interests of the Labour Party. The Campaign Group has not regularly published pamphlets or briefing documents suggestive of sweeping policy differentiation between itself and party leaders and, similar to Tribune, the most thorough expositions of Campaign Group thinking are provided by the Group's own newspaper, *Campaign Group News*, published monthly since March 1986.

At first inspection, it appears as if the ideological and programmatic priorities of the Campaign Group of the late-1990s have changed remarkably little since its foundation in December 1982. These assessments are also reinforced by media stereotypes of the 'hard-left', especially given the remarkable continuity of Campaign Group membership among leading left-wingers like Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Jeremy Corbyn, Diane Abbott and Ken Livingstone. The Group has maintained a variety of radical policy positions long abandoned by Labour's front-bench. These have included particular commitments to extensive public ownership, exchange and import controls, nuclear

disarmament, reductions in defence spending, trade union rights, the protection of internal party democracy, and the maintenance of high levels of government spending in the public sector. Much of this ‘manifesto’ was highlighted by Benn in 1986:

“...we must demand work for all, good homes, lifelong education, a free health service, and dignity for those who have retired, and be sure that neither the EEC nor the IMF are allowed to prevent us from achieving these objectives...the re-establishment of trade unionism free from government control...a major extension of common ownership...an end to discrimination against women, black people and gays, and minority groups...we must get Britain out of Ireland, all American forces out of Britain, secure substantial cuts in the arms budget, and a real UN peace policy outside NATO...”⁴⁹

However, the Campaign Group was like other factional groups of the Left given that it experienced a range of ideological pressures on its agenda, requiring it to adapt and amend its programme. In some of areas of policy, the Campaign Group disengaged from past commitments, but in other areas the Group merely re-radicalised its platform and used wider political events to justify the adoption of a significantly divergent agenda.

One of the most commonly revisited policy themes of the Labour Left has involved the question of common ownership ‘of the means of production, distribution and exchange’. As Vladimir Derer suggested to supporters of the Campaign Group, for the Left to re-establish itself it must concentrate on two key themes – grassroots party democracy and the long-held commitment of socialists to the extension of public ownership. Derer contended that ‘without such an extension into every crucial sector of the economy’ there could ‘be no planned expansion’.⁵⁰ The Campaign Group viewed common ownership as an integral part of the Alternative Economic Strategy. As the soft-left increasingly distanced itself from the strict provisions of the AES after the 1983 defeat, the Campaign Group reasserted the centrality of public ownership as a key pillar of Labour’s economic and industrial programme. Robin Laney implied that ‘only public ownership of the banks, financial institutions and main manufacturing companies will allow a Labour government to run the economy according to the party’s priorities.’⁵¹ In defending the established modes of common ownership, the Group urged party activists

⁴⁹ Campaign Group News (CGN) 09.86

⁵⁰ CGN 04.86

⁵¹ CGN 12.86

to endorse a number of model conference resolutions that reinforced established AES thinking:

“Conference believes that the top priorities of the next Labour government must be a return to full employment, high economic growth and the re-industrialisation of Britain. To achieve these goals, the next Labour government will need to draw up a plan for national and local economic development which brings together unused resources and unmet needs. Conference considers that for such a plan to succeed it will be necessary to take into public ownership at least one major company in each of the 25 sectors of the economy, under genuinely accountable democratic management and control...the next Labour government should also consider taking major financial institutions into public ownership to direct investment effectively”.⁵²

The Campaign Group remained vociferously opposed to the Policy Review process, especially the growing acceptance by party leaders of the role of the market and private capital, and the proposals for social ownership to replace traditional modes of nationalisation. In the short-term, the Group reiterated support for the nationalisation of the leading 25 manufacturing companies and financial institutions, observing that ‘social ownership seems to have passed unnoticed by the electorate’ and, therefore, ‘lacks credibility’ as an alternative framework of industrial ownership.⁵³ The Campaign Group concluded that the Policy Review destroyed ‘the principle of a planned economy in favour of accommodation of the market’. Moreover, it suggested that some of alternatives to nationalisation, like public interest companies, were used ‘as a cover for abandoning public ownership rather than taking powers over the private sector’.⁵⁴

As the Policy Review gathered pace, the question of public ownership slowly lost its primacy at the forefront of the Campaign Group’s economic agenda. For example, after 1989, the Group abandoned commitments to nationalise the ‘commanding heights’ of the economy through public ownership of at least one company in each of the twenty-five industrial sectors of the economy. This departure, perhaps ironically, coincided with the group’s re-branding as the ‘*Socialist* Campaign Group of Labour MPs’. In place of public ownership, the Campaign Group’s economic agenda concentrated on exchange controls, progressive taxation, reductions in military spending, and inflation-indexing of public expenditure as more immediate and effective measures to stimulate economic

⁵² CGN 09.86

⁵³ CGN 05.87

⁵⁴ CGN 08.88

growth, investment and full employment.⁵⁵ Although the Group did not completely abandon common ownership, it was evident that it no longer sought the sweeping programme of nationalisation once typical of its programme. Instead of a broad programme of nationalisation in keeping with the traditional orthodoxy of the AES, the Campaign Group targeted only those key public utilities privatised by the Conservative government after 1983. The Campaign Group aimed to establish ‘a new core of publicly-owned companies’, and further acknowledged the important question of shareholder compensation was that it ‘need not put any significant burden on the Exchequer if it is paid in the form of long-term government securities’.⁵⁶

However, the narrowing of Campaign Group policy towards public ownership was a function of broader trends of disengagement from the alternative economic philosophy of the Labour Left. The traditional shibboleths of nationalised industries and the planned economy were downgraded in favour of other interventionist devices:

“The challenge for Labour is...to convince the electorate that we have a viable [economic] alternative...This requires, first that interest rates and the exchange rate are set at levels which favour economic growth...second, economic growth will not be sustainable...without qualitatively raising the level of investment...third, the resources required to raise investment and meet social provision should come from cutting military spending and transferring the burden of taxation back on to those who benefited from the Tories tax cuts for the rich...fourth, a Labour government will need to put in place a system of incentives and exchange controls to focus capital investment on the domestic productive economy”.⁵⁷

The arrival of Blair’s New Labour revived the question of public ownership, albeit temporarily. Following Blair’s assurances at the 1994 conference to replace Clause 4 with a more ‘modern’ statement of aims and values, the Group launched its ‘Defend Clause 4’ campaign to appeal directly to Labour’s grassroots membership to retain the symbolic constitutional commitment to common ownership. By criticising the leadership’s acquiescence towards the retention of privately-owned public utilities, much of the campaign focused on rising consumer prices against a visible backdrop of sharp increases in utility share value and in the salaries of their top directors and managers. Ken Livingstone asserted that ‘the case for public ownership of the utilities rests not on some article of faith’ but on a clear understanding that renationalisation was the only means by

⁵⁵ Socialist Campaign Group News (SCGN) 11.89

⁵⁶ SCGN 10.91

⁵⁷ SCGN 02.94

which the utilities could ‘serve the interests of society as a whole rather than merely their shareholders and directors’.⁵⁸ Others associated the retention of Clause 4 with Labour’s commitment to defend the working-classes through the redistribution of wealth. Diane Abbott suggested that Clause 4 put forward ‘a class-based analysis of society’ which committed Labour to redistribution by offering ‘an implicit critique of the free market’. After fifteen years of Conservative administration, Abbott suggested that ‘now more than ever, the Labour Party needs to commit itself to the values of public ownership and the redistribution of wealth’.⁵⁹

Following the successful revision of Clause 4 in 1995, the Group returned to rather bland statements of support in the return of the major public utilities to public ownership.⁶⁰ It neither indicated the number of companies it wished to see renationalised, nor did it outline the means by which a framework of publicly-owned enterprises would be incorporated into government economic planning. Rather misleadingly, however, the Campaign Group borrowed the softer language characteristic of the Policy Review to conceal its lack of policy shift. Jim Mortimer suggested that,

“The social ownership of the utilities including gas, electricity, coal, nuclear power, water, public transport including railways, telecommunications, and a stake in oil extraction, together with the existing public ownership of the postal service would provide a powerful lever for the stimulation of investment and hence for employment...compensation could be paid in the form of bonds to provide an annual rate of return which would be competitive for pension funds and other institutional investments”.⁶¹

Although the Campaign Group clearly narrowed its public ownership policy, it continued to advance the principle of returning the essential utilities to nationalised state management. To this end, therefore, the Group remained significantly at-odds with New Labour thinking, and further cemented an ideological distinction from those soft-left Tribunites who more readily accepted social ownership and the mixed economy. Rather than responding to party-level ideological transformation by moderating its own commitments, the Group simply re-focused its sights and, relative at least to Tribune, did so long after others had effectively abandoned renationalisation altogether. The Campaign Group neither departed from public ownership as a fundamental ideological

⁵⁸ SCGN 02.95

⁵⁹ SCGN 03.95

⁶⁰ For statements of Campaign Group policy following Blair’s election see SCGN 07.95, 07.96, 07.97

⁶¹ SCGN 09.95 – author’s emphasis

tenet, nor could it acknowledge that private capital could play constructive roles in the functioning of a modern, internationally competitive economy. In this respect, the Campaign Group's response to party-level transformation was simply to circumscribe its programme.

Like other sections of the Labour Left, the Campaign Group showed consistent support for non-nuclear defence policies based on unilateral disarmament and the reduction of government military spending to finance its economic priorities. As Gavin Strang revealed, the Campaign Group's defence policy reiterated the ideological sentiments of Labour's 1983 manifesto:

"We must advocate boldly our commitments to transform this country's military strategy from one based on the use or threatened use of nuclear weapons to a credible non-nuclear defence capability and to decisively reduce military spending. That means that the next Labour government will unilaterally cancel Trident, decommission Polaris, abolish all other British nuclear weapons [and] remove all US weapons and nuclear bases from British territory. An historic reduction in the level of military spending is crucial if the Labour government is to successfully implement its employment, industrial and social policies".⁶²

The Campaign Group strongly criticised the shift in party policy towards multilateralism and proposals to transfer defence spending towards conventional defence.⁶³ By opposing the party's revised defence programme, the Campaign Group complained that party leaders had effectively rejected 'the idea of reduction of the burden of military spending [and] any policies not accepted by an American dominated NATO'.⁶⁴ Bob Clay suggested that 'the issue of unilateral nuclear disarmament summarises everything which is wrong with the policy review'.⁶⁵

Events on the international stage, notably East-West rapprochement, undermined the Campaign Group's commitment to unilateralism. The Group was initially successful in mobilising grassroots support for the re-endorsement of unilateralism, particularly at the 1988 party conference. But the disintegration of communist regimes in Eastern Europe

⁶² CGN 09.86

⁶³ CGN 04.87

⁶⁴ CGN 06.88

⁶⁵ CGN 08.88

after 1989 slowly dissolved popular enthusiasm for disarmament as the issue itself disappeared from the political agenda.⁶⁶

The Campaign Group suggested that Labour would not necessarily be 'any more electable because it abandons unilateralism', yet its non-nuclear policy was gradually removed from its programme.⁶⁷ In 1991, the Group completely excised unilateralism as a stated policy objective in its model conference resolutions, as it switched to a new emphasis on the reduction of British military spending to European averages.⁶⁸ Whereas the Campaign Group continued to support the cancellation of Trident after the 1992 election, it remained quiescent on issues such as the retention of Polaris and the enduring presence of American forces on British soil. More importantly, the Campaign Group appeared to tacitly endorse multilateralism by emphasising the need for a 'long standing commitment to a non-nuclear defence policy *as part* of the process of nuclear disarmament world-wide'.⁶⁹ By 1994, the nuclear issue disappeared altogether, and the Group confined the parameters of its security programme exclusively to commitments to reduce overall government defence spending.⁷⁰

The hard-left's anti-militarism was particularly evident in its opposition to the involvement of British troops in conflicts abroad. During the 1991 Gulf War, the Campaign Group played an important role in establishing the 'Committee to Stop War in the Gulf' which was designed to build grassroots support for an international cease-fire. The Group also publicly diverged from the bi-partisan consensus in criticising the government's decision to send British troops as part of an international contingent to reclaim occupied Kuwait and to protect Kurdish civilians from Iraqi genocide.⁷¹ In 1993, the Group declared its public opposition to the despatch of British peacekeeping troops to the Balkans following the outbreak of civil war in the former Yugoslavia.⁷²

⁶⁶ A resolution in support of unilateralism was approved at the 1988 party conference by 3,715,000 votes to 2,470,000 votes; CGN 11.88; LPACR (1988), p.140

⁶⁷ SCGN 10.89

⁶⁸ SCGN 05.91

⁶⁹ SCGN 05.92, 05.93

⁷⁰ SCGN 07.95

⁷¹ SCGN 12.90, 02.91

⁷² SCGN 05.93

The abandonment of unilateralism by the Campaign Group was a product of changing international events, rather than a response to party-level policy shifts towards multilateralism. In an increasingly interdependent world, unilateralism could not be sustained. Nor was it strategically necessary given the dissipation of superpower conflict at the end of the Cold War. But, by retaining an anti-militaristic foreign policy alongside commitments to reduce government defence spending, the hard-left showed that it rejected much of the underlying philosophy of defence policy at the party-level. As with its stance towards public ownership, the Campaign Group showed a propensity simply to delimit its programme and, consequently, it remained significantly at-odds with the Labour front-bench on such issues.

The Campaign Group also rekindled the ideological antipathy shown by the Labour Left in the 1970s towards questions of further European integration, especially the restrictions which Community membership imposed on the ability of future Labour governments to pursue alternative economic priorities. Although the hard-left rarely delivered explicit statements in favour of withdrawal after Labour's 1983 defeat, its approach was clearly designed to resist further transfers of power to European institutions, notably in the field of economic policy-making. The logic of its European policy would either have resulted in Britain's eventual withdrawal from the Community, or it would have caused insurmountable divisions between Britain and its continental partners. Les Huckfield suggested that future Labour governments should repeal those clauses of the European Communities Act (1973) which pre-determined the supremacy of European jurisprudence over national law. This would enable the pursuit of Labour's alternative economic strategy, especially by enabling government 'to introduce controls on the export of capital and tax incentives to keep investment in this country'.⁷³ Bob Cryer concluded that

"The Campaign Group...does not believe that the issue of withdrawal is 'dead and buried'...We shall keep to party conference decisions, believing that any future Labour government will have to withdraw from the Common Market in order to carry out its programme of economic revival of the UK economy...the free movement of capital [cannot] provide a basis for socialist advance in Europe".⁷⁴

⁷³ CGN 04.86

⁷⁴ CGN 07.87

The Campaign Group was an ardent opponent of the Policy Review's shift in European policy, and the hard-left continued to stress the importance of repealing key clauses of Britain's accession treaty to 'regain economic powers' and to maintain 'the option of withdrawal in the last resort'.⁷⁵ Eric Deakins contended that British membership of the Community had been an 'economic disaster'. An extension of integration would prevent Labour governments from pursuing key economic goals and would require additional transfers of legislative competence to unaccountable European institutions. Further integration might also harm the developing world through regional protectionism ('fortress Europe') and the ineffective operation of the Community's systems of agricultural price-support.⁷⁶

The rejuvenation of the European project following the 'sclerosis' of the mid-1980s was powerfully symbolised by the signing of the Single European Act in 1987 and the endorsement of the Commission's programme for the creation of a European single market by December 1992. These initiatives provided the hard-left with a number of different areas of concern, typically focused around the implied removal of British economic and political sovereignty. In 1989, the Group turned its attention towards an apparent European consensus regarding the merits of economic union between the Member States and the important preparatory role of ERM membership. The Campaign Group suggested that a currency union would be an economic 'diversion', undermining 'any prospect of a British Labour government running the economy precisely because it would remove its ability to control vital features of economic policy'.⁷⁷ The decision by the Conservative government to enter the ERM in October 1990 was heavily criticised by the hard-left, most of whom regarded the price at which sterling entered the system (DM 2.95) as far too inflated. Ken Livingstone suggested in January 1991 that ERM membership stimulated interest rate growth and further extended Britain's economic recession. Livingstone's solution involved the reduction of interest rates and the devaluation of sterling 'to boost exports and therefore increase demand in the economy'.⁷⁸ Both strategies militated against the long-term fixing of currencies, the pursuit of which would have involved Britain's suspension from the ERM. But, as Brian

⁷⁵ CGN 08.88

⁷⁶ CGN 05.88

⁷⁷ SCGN 11.89

⁷⁸ SCGN 01.91

Bowles asserted, to endorse economic and monetary union ‘is simply to support Britain becoming a permanent centre of mass unemployment and low living standards – it is a deadly trap for the labour movement’.⁷⁹

The Campaign Group responded to the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in December 1991 by attempting to build popular support for a referendum to determine whether the Treaty should be ratified into domestic law. Dennis Skinner concluded that ‘whatever the differences on the Common Market it makes sense to consult the British people before massively transferring the power to determine this country’s economic policy from London to Brussels’.⁸⁰ Although this strategy ultimately failed – largely because the Conservative government rejected all suggestion of a plebiscite – the hard-left spent much of 1992 trying to convince the Labour front-bench to vote against ratification. This prompted seemingly wild predictions as to the future of Europe under the Treaty. Diane Abbott suggested that the ERM and Maastricht encouraged ‘soaring unemployment, weakened trade unions, racism and the rise of the fascists’.⁸¹ Others acknowledged the strategic importance of opposing ratification by exploiting Euro-scepticism and dissent inside the Conservative government. Livingstone concluded that the Maastricht vote would be Labour’s ‘best chance to defeat the Tories’. Moreover, the Group contended that the Treaty and its underlying economic criteria represented the pre-eminence of monetarism and an international political assault on national sovereignty in the economic arena:

“Maastricht contains the most savage attack on welfare spending in Europe since the Second World War...It is a monetarist treaty. Everything – employment, living standards and social provisions – is subordinate to price stability. And, because the results of this will be profoundly unpopular, economic policy is to be taken out of the hands of elected governments...We did not struggle for democracy for 200 years only to voluntarily hand it over to a gang of central bankers whose economic objectives have nothing in common with the people who elected us”.⁸²

The eventual ratification of the Treaty did not dissipate the Campaign Group’s hostility towards Maastricht. Diane Abbott noted that the Treaty created new forms of European citizenship that systematically failed to address the peculiarities of Commonwealth

⁷⁹ SCGN 11.91

⁸⁰ SCGN 12.91

⁸¹ SCGN 07.92

⁸² SCGN 11.92

subjects resident in Britain without full nationality.⁸³ The anti-Maastricht campaign was even supported by Bryan Gould, a political figure not traditionally associated with the ‘hard-left’. Gould reinforced the Group’s concern regarding the democratic accountability of independent central banks, and suggested that ‘what is worrying about the Maastricht Treaty is that it provides a blueprint for a Europe in which the debate about economic policy is irreversibly settled in favour of the [central] bankers’.⁸⁴ The Group also continued to emphasise the monetarist nature of the Treaty. Michael Hindley contended that rather than reducing inflation to within one percent of the best European performer the Treaty should pledge to reduce unemployment, and ‘instead of cutting deficit spending to three percent we could encourage investment in jobs and manufacturing’.⁸⁵ The Campaign Group complained that the Maastricht criteria for monetary union necessitated budgetary cuts and fiscal rectitude on the part of participating economies. The Group drew particular lessons from the experiences of those countries already committed to monetary union by 1999. Roger Berry concluded that

“Recent public spending cuts to achieve the Maastricht criteria – most notably but not exclusively in France – demonstrate that the current road to a single European currency is a recipe for even more unemployment, social division and poverty in Europe”.⁸⁶

In 1996, the Campaign Group forwarded model conference resolutions rejecting monetary union for the foreseeable future, and two months later the Group further cemented this position by publicly declaring its opposition to the underlying principles of the entire Maastricht Treaty.⁸⁷

On the question of Europe, therefore, the Campaign Group made little substantive change in thinking in reaction to party-level policy shifts. It also maintained an ideological distinctiveness from the Tribune soft-left to the extent that it refused to acknowledge the imperatives of constructive engagement with European allies. Although there were a number of similarities between the positions of Tribune and the Campaign Group on Maastricht, the fervency and continuity of the hard-left’s opposition to

⁸³ SCGN 02.93

⁸⁴ SCGN 03.93

⁸⁵ SCGN 04.94

⁸⁶ SCGN 02.96

⁸⁷ SCGN 05.96, 07.96

Europe highlighted that the Campaign Group maintained rather ‘isolationist’ anti-European sentiments. As in other areas of policy, the Group downgraded those ideological precepts which were no longer electorally credible or sustainable, while simultaneously advancing a series of radical initiatives elsewhere which sustained marked ideological distances between the hard-left, the soft-left and party élites.

The Campaign Group also maintained distinctive ideological platforms regarding other questions of social policy. For example, the hard-left opposed party leaders by consistently endorsing the need for autonomous sections in party structures to correct the under-representation of women and members from ethnic communities.⁸⁸ This policy was further extended to the parliamentary arena. In 1989, the Campaign Group declared that it would campaign for all-women shortlists to ensure that the parliamentary party contained at least 40% women within ten years. In 1996, the Group advanced a policy of gender parity by 2005.⁸⁹ Similarly, in 1993, the Group announced that it sought the introduction of all-black shortlists in those constituencies where ethnic populations comprised more than 15% of the local electorate.⁹⁰

The rise of the European far-right following the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe encouraged the Campaign Group to mount regular campaigns against racism and race-related crimes. The hard-left was particularly concerned at the success of the neo-fascist British National Party in Tower Hamlets in the 1993 local elections, and by the ‘institutionalised racism’ shown by the Metropolitan Police in its investigation of the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence shortly thereafter.⁹¹ The Group published lengthy articles denouncing the far-right, and pledged its support for popular direct-action movements like Anti-Racist Action and the TUC’s anti-racism campaign.⁹² The hard-left also opposed Conservative immigration and asylum legislation, and sought to commit a future Labour government to their immediate repeal.⁹³

⁸⁸ CGN 04.87

⁸⁹ CGN 04.89, SCGN 05.96

⁹⁰ SCGN 05.93

⁹¹ SCGN 10.93

⁹² SCGN 03.94

⁹³ SCGN 01.96

On Northern Ireland, the Campaign Group regularly asserted the importance of the withdrawal of British troops and publicly championed the campaigns to free convicted terrorists on appeal, notably the Birmingham Six.⁹⁴ The hard-left in Parliament also systematically opposed the annual renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (1974). But the growing bi-partisan consensus on Ireland, evident at Westminster in the early-1990s, led to a moderation of the Campaign Group's stance on the Irish question. Although the Group continued to publicly support the reunification of Ireland, at least until 1993, the establishment of formal peace talks effected a softening of its stated policy. As Benn declared by reiterating Churchill's famous maxim, 'the only alternative to war, war is jaw, jaw' and 'only out of discussion will a solution be found'.⁹⁵ By 1995, the Group excised all references to the withdrawal of troops, although it maintained an ideological distinctiveness from the front-bench by emphasising the need alter the structures of local policing, create all-Ireland institutional bodies and support the regeneration of the region through economic intervention.⁹⁶ This agenda would not be realised until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

Militant: the extreme-left and policy transformation

The Militant Tendency became the most successful of the Trotskyite revolutionary-socialist groups to penetrate the grassroots membership of the Labour Party and trade union movement. As a distinct faction, the Militant Tendency and its predecessor, the Revolutionary Socialist League, evolved much of its ideological programme and strategy for entryism both from Trotsky himself, but also more broadly from the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. What distinguished Militant from other revolutionary groups in Britain, such as the Socialist Workers' Party or British communists, was its unwavering adherence to Trotsky's 'logic' of entryism into mainstream socialist and social-democratic parties. Trotsky identified these parties as more suitable vehicles – than either Comintern or individual communist parties at the national level – for conveying revolutionary principles to working people. For Trotsky, entryism into the Labour Party would reap much greater long-term reward:

⁹⁴ CGN 04.86, 10.86, 02.87

⁹⁵ SCGN 10.93

⁹⁶ SCGN 05.95

“Regardless of how we enter, we will have a secret faction from the very beginning. Our subsequent actions will depend on our progress within the LP [Labour Party]... While it is necessary for the revolutionary party to maintain its independence at all times, a revolutionary group of a few hundred comrades is not a revolutionary party and can work most effectively at present by opposition to the social patriots within mass parties”.⁹⁷

Militant’s ideological agenda also replicated Trotsky’s Transitional Programme presented to the founding conference of the Fourth International in 1938. The Programme provided Trotskyists with a theoretical framework by which to develop a range of popular, transitional policies designed to bridge the gap between the prevailing system of capitalism and eventual international socialism by workers’ revolution.

“It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands [capitalism] and the socialist programme of the revolution. The bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today’s conditions and from today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat”.⁹⁸

Consequently, the strategic objectives of the Militant Tendency have sought to build and mobilise support within existing social democratic organisations in preparation for international socialist revolution, to await a time when ‘the conditions are ripe’.⁹⁹ This idea of ‘transitionality’ has remained a particularly constant theme throughout the history of the Tendency. In 1943, Ted Grant declared that it was necessary to relate ‘the ideas of Marxism in practice to the experiences of workers themselves’ and that only once this had been achieved could ‘the ground be laid for the victory of socialism in Britain and internationally’.¹⁰⁰ This mantra was repeated thirty years later when Grant again suggested that ‘what is required is a burning faith in the capacity and power of the organised working class *once* it has understood the day-to-day transitional policies and the socialist objective of the transformation of society’.¹⁰¹

Another regular leitmotif expressed by Militant involved the reiteration of Trotsky’s belief that the British capitalist class was ‘tobogganing towards disaster with its eyes closed’ and, hence, conceptions of transitionality appreciated that global capitalism was

⁹⁷ Trotsky (1977), pp.379, 382

⁹⁸ Trotsky (1938/1973), p.183

⁹⁹ *Bulletin of Marxist Studies*, Summer 1985, p.9

¹⁰⁰ Woods in Grant (1975), p.2

¹⁰¹ *British Perspectives and Tasks*, August 1981; see also Shipley (1983), p.170

not only inherently flawed but also subjected to terminal decline. The Tendency regularly revisited these notions, declaring the irreversibility and inevitability of the 'crisis of capitalism', the systematic and 'progressive decline in the power and economic viability of British capitalism' and the 'betrayal of working-class people' by an acquiescent Labour movement.¹⁰² As *Militant* asserted, only *its* programme could successfully avert global economic and industrial catastrophe wrought by the 'death agony' of British capitalism.¹⁰³ The cornerstones of *Militant's* ideology have, therefore, sought to encourage the propagation of alternative strategies designed to bring about a transition from the inevitability of economic catastrophe to the utopian ideal of true international socialism.

A common criticism, therefore, is that the *Militant* Tendency has engaged in ideological reductionism, delimiting all political issues to simple economics in desiring the eventual overthrow of the prevailing structures of capitalism. The excessive simplicity of such 'reductive economics' appears to be a trait common of a number of other Marxist-Leninist and Trotskyite groups in Britain. Like other groups, the *Militant* Tendency, its predecessor and successor, have shown little apparent willingness to alter its ideological orientation regarding the fundamentals of its own reading of revolutionary socialist thought. To this day, *Militant* supporters continue to reductively stress both the transitional qualities of its ideological programme and the inevitability of an impending crisis of global capitalism.

The Trotskyite strategy of entryism rendered the organisation and operation of the *Militant* Tendency to be secretive and covert. Most Labour activists knew that *Militant* existed, and they were also free to openly purchase *Militant* newspapers and privately donate to *Militant* funds if they chose to do so. But the Tendency's organisation was closed to non-members, and few outside it knew with any degree of surety which Labour Party members were, in fact, simultaneously active within the Tendency. In defence against charges that *Militant* was operating as a 'party-within-a-party', contrary to Labour's constitution, its leadership argued that *Militant's* operations were limited to the publication of newspapers and theoretical journals. This meant that public statements of ideology were typically confined to *Militant* publications themselves. The only other widely available statements of the Tendency's programme were duplicated either as part

¹⁰² *British Perspectives and Tasks*, August 1981, p.1

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p.3

of independent research into the Tendency, or as evidence submitted to successive Labour Party investigations. Two key documents are particularly useful for the post-1979 period: Ted Grant's meta-theoretical *British Perspectives and Tasks* published in 1981 (updated in 1985), and the more programmatic *What We Stand For* written by Peter Taaffe in 1981 (revised in 1986). However, systematic analysis over time requires examination of either Militant's theoretical quarterly journal *Militant International Review* (edited by Ted Grant) or, more usefully, its weekly newspaper *Militant: the Marxist paper for Labour and Youth* (edited by Peter Taaffe). Both are included as part of the Harvester Primary Social Sources series, available on microform.¹⁰⁴

As discussed above, it is a trait inherent of many Trotskyite groups to stress the importance of economics and class issues over all others in the development of 'transitional' policies. In this regard, Militant was not substantively different to other revolutionary groups by reducing its core ideological principles to economics. Economic policy provided the superstructure of Militant's aims and objectives, and throughout the 1979-97 period five key economic principles were proclaimed with remarkable regularity:

- ending unemployment by limiting the working week to 35 hours.
- increasing public expenditure to provide for major public works in health, housing and education
- introduction of a minimum wage in line with the Council of Europe's 'decency threshold'
- nationalisation of the leading monopolies, including banks and building societies
- nationalised industries under tri-partite control of workers, trade unionists and Government

If economic policy formed the bedrock of Militant's ideological programme it was the Tendency's policy towards the nationalisation of the leading British corporations and banking institutions which provided the core of its alternative economic strategy. Militant consistently advocated a programme for the nationalisation of monopolies under the direct management of workers, albeit that after 1993 Militant arbitrarily reduced its sights from the top 200 to the leading 150 companies.¹⁰⁵ Militant's main economic thinking was provided by Oxford economist Andrew Glyn, at least until Glyn left the Tendency in the

¹⁰⁴ see also *The Left in Britain: A bibliographical guide*, an author, title and chronological index to accompany the Harvester Primary Social Sources microform collection, Harvester Press, Brighton, updated annually. This is available at the British Library of Political and Economic Science [reference M (R145) – Militant and Militant International Review; and ZHX3 Harvester bibliographical guide]

¹⁰⁵ Militant 02.04.93

mid-1980s.¹⁰⁶ As Glyn suggested, ‘the nationalisation of the 200 or so companies which control 60 per cent or more of the assets in the UK would be the indispensable minimum for securing real control over, and thus the ability to plan, the economy’.¹⁰⁷ This theme was revisited in all major public statements of Militant ideology throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Unsurprisingly, Militant vehemently opposed the privatisation of key public utilities undertaken by successive Conservative governments after 1983. In addition to transferring the leading commercial and banking organisations to public ownership, Militant pledged to immediately work for ‘the renationalisation of all companies privatised by the Conservatives’. But the growth of mass share-ownership following the privatisation of British Telecom and British Gas presented the Tendency with a significant ideological dilemma – whether to support mass compensation or not. This was an issue which the Labour Party itself was forced to address. Before Labour formally abandoned public ownership in the Policy Review, party leaders considered whether renationalisation could be afforded, if the next Labour government should simply acquire share equity without compensation, or whether additional regulation would satisfy public demand for greater accountability in the provision of important services. Party leaders eventually chose the latter. Militant responded by demanding ‘compensation on the basis of proven need’. Since share purchasing required certain levels of disposable income, Militant’s policy of compensation was presumably designed only for those in financial hardship. For the majority of ordinary working shareholders, therefore, the implication of Militant’s objective involved the widespread confiscation of share capital without compensation. As *Militant* revealed,

“It would not be too expensive to bring into public ownership the finance institutions and top commercial companies, if compensation was restricted to those who were unable to work and needed the income from their small investments...why should capitalist shareholders be compensated? They have had enough compensation over the years”.¹⁰⁸

Militant’s support for renationalisation and the workers’ control of industry continued beyond the later privatisations undertaken the Conservative government, most notably

¹⁰⁶ see Glyn (1979, 1983)

¹⁰⁷ Militant 06.04.79

¹⁰⁸ Militant 19.05.89

following the deregulation of the water and electricity industries in 1989 and 1991. For example, Militant sought to halt the privatisation of water companies through immediate industrial action by water workers to encourage the industry's renationalisation and eventual expansion. As *Militant* claimed, the water industry should come under the direction of 'worker control and management, with [water] boards elected to represent water workers, consumers, local authorities and workers in other industries'.¹⁰⁹

Labour's Policy Review provided Militant with an important opportunity to disengage from the growing climate of acceptance towards 'social ownership' and the mixed economy. Alan Tuffin observed that the Labour Party of the late-1980s required 'an open and honest admission that a socialised economy will retain a prominent private sector and that market forces are the most efficient way of producing and of distributing many commodities'. Tuffin further concluded that the Left's support for public ownership resembled a 'fetish' and that social ownership and the regulation of a mixed economy had become the most 'desirable end'.¹¹⁰ The leadership of Militant avowedly disagreed. In a lengthy article written by Peter Taaffe in advance of Labour's 1988 annual conference, he suggested that social ownership would lead the Labour Party up a 'blind alley'. Taaffe also confidently predicted that 'the idea of nationalisation and socialist planning will gain enormous popularity amongst all workers as the anarchy and chaos of capitalism is manifested'.¹¹¹

Following the Review, the Tendency continued to oppose Labour's downgrading of public ownership in favour of government regulation of a mixed economy. Militant claimed that nationalisation of the leading banks and financial institutions would have prevented the 'economic fiasco' of Black Wednesday in September 1992. Moreover, it urged a future Labour government to re-nationalise the entire energy industry to 'stop the overpaid profiteering management dictating energy policy' and to protect NHS funding through the public ownership of pharmaceutical industries.¹¹² When Tony Blair proposed the revision of Clause 4 in his October 1994 conference speech, Militant used the opportunity to reiterate its long-standing commitment towards public ownership,

¹⁰⁹ Militant 07.04.89

¹¹⁰ Tuffin (1988)

¹¹¹ Militant 30.09.88

¹¹² Militant 10.10.92

renationalisation and workers' control. As *Militant* declared shortly before Labour's special conference in April 1995,

"Militant Labour defends Clause Four, not for sentimental or traditional reasons but because public ownership is the only way for working people to control the economy and run it in the interests of the majority of the population and not the privileged few...you can't plan what you don't control and you can't control what you don't own".¹¹³

The primacy of Militant's economic programme, particularly the emphasis on the nationalisation of the 'commanding heights' of the economy and the need for socialist economic planning, pre-determined Militant's ideological positioning towards a range of social and community issues during the 1980s and 1990s. Over time, the Tendency tended to pay 'lip service' towards anti-discrimination policies, especially concerning sexual and racial discrimination. Conscious of the need to develop more extensive and broader social appeal, particularly in light of criticisms that Militant activists concentrated on economic issues to the exclusion of all others, the Tendency used the growing opposition to the Conservative government as an opportunity to demarcate a distinctive social agenda. But these opportunistic displays of opposition concealed that, in fact, Militant continued to view the prevailing system of capitalism as *the* main source of all social inequity.

"[Recently] the basic list of Militant's public demands has been expanded, partly to allow for mounting criticisms that Militant had no concern for the rights of women, gays and blacks...All these additions have been made to increase Militant's appeal amongst potential recruits, but apart from these alterations, Militant's main economic programme has remained remarkably unchanged".¹¹⁴

Throughout the period, Militant contended that social discrimination was essentially a function of global capitalism and could only be eradicated through international workers' revolution. This led Militant, particularly in the early-1980s, to conflate the demands of various communities by blandly suggesting the need to unify the forces of 'opposition to all forms of discrimination against women, black and Asian workers and other minority groups in society'.¹¹⁵ Despite the apparent breadth of social issues covered by Militant in

¹¹³ Militant 31.03.95

¹¹⁴ Crick (1986), p.74

¹¹⁵ Militant 01.06.83

its various publications, the Tendency provided few workable solutions to important questions of social integration.

Militant opposed strategies to tackle discrimination through coalitions with autonomous organisations, suggesting that caucuses undermined the important goal of uniting workers in challenging the global capitalist 'infrastructure'. The Tendency rejected demands for the establishment of separate Black Sections in the Labour Party during the 1980s, claiming that they provided 'no solution' to the problems of black representation in the party.¹¹⁶ Militant refused to join the Anti-Nazi League because the group was controlled by the rival Socialist Workers' Party. At the local level, Militant also declined to join the Liverpool black caucus, choosing to establish its own Merseyside Action Group instead.

Militant displayed a particular hostility to the women's movement. In 1977, Ted Grant unfairly suggested that the women's movement was dominated by 'petty-bourgeois' feminists who subjected their cause to 'hysteria'.¹¹⁷ As with Black Sections, Militant opposed the idea of autonomous caucuses for women in the Labour Party, claiming that solutions to sexual discrimination lay 'not in the separation of women' but only 'in unity with youth and adult workers'. Militant envisaged the creation of a broad cross-cutting movement against discrimination which 'linked the idea of transformation of society to the perspectives and theory of Marxism'.¹¹⁸ Moreover, the Tendency rejected demands for positive discrimination, especially through 'quota' schemes. As Lesley Holt remarked, affirmative action programmes 'did not have the positive effects envisaged by its advocates'. In repeating the established Militant approach, Holt contended that 'only socialist planning with the ownership and control of industry' in the hands of workers themselves could bring about the 'real emancipation' of women.¹¹⁹

Thus, Militant responded to the growing liberalisation of British society towards gender issues by reiterating its established economic orthodoxy that discrimination and inequality were by-products of the prevailing system of global capitalism. In March 1987,

¹¹⁶ Militant 28.08.87

¹¹⁷ British Perspectives 1977, p.29; see also Crick (1986), p.89

¹¹⁸ Grant (1985), p.25

¹¹⁹ Militant 11.06.82

Militant reported on a case brought by an Oxford University student in which he successfully prevented his ex-partner from terminating her pregnancy. Although Militant defended the theoretical basis of abortion-on-demand, it asserted that women only considered termination because of the structural failings of capitalism. Militant concluded that abortions would not be necessary if the economy was managed according to a socialist plan of production where government provided for additional public expenditure in all areas affecting women's lives:

“There are many women who ‘chose’ abortions because they can’t face bringing up a child or an extra child under their present circumstances. If women are really to be free to choose they must be able to choose to keep a child. This will mean...a crash house building programme...good quality flexible childcare...maternity and paternity leave for six months on full pay...If these demands were implemented...the circumstances which force many women into abortion would be removed”.¹²⁰

The arrest and conviction of Sara Thornton and Kiranjit Ahluwalia on charges of murder raised the profile of women living in abusive and violent domestic relationships. Although Militant played an important role in building campaigns to free both women on appeal, particularly through its relationship with the national Campaign Against Domestic Violence, Militant framed the solutions to domestic violence in exclusively economic terms. Militant suggested that women could only leave violent relationships if they enjoyed underlying economic security, and asserted further that the problems surrounding domestic violence would be eradicated by additional funding for refuges, council housing, nursery places, after-school care and increased child benefit payments. Margaret Creer myopically concluded that all forms of domestic violence would be eliminated through the creation of a socialist society ‘under the democratic control of the working class men and women who built it’.¹²¹

The inner-city riots in Brixton, Toxteth and Tottenham in 1981 and 1985 provided Militant with another important strategic opportunity to build support among ethnic communities for a broad spectrum of policies designed to tackle racial discrimination and economic injustice. But the Tendency concentrated almost exclusively on policing issues, suggesting that the riots largely occurred in reaction to police brutality. Similar to its views on gender politics, Militant claimed that racial discrimination and social exclusion

¹²⁰ Militant 20.03.87

¹²¹ Militant 22.11.91

could only be tackled through the establishment of a socialist society. In a lengthy supplement assessing the consequences of the Brixton riot in April 1981, the Tendency proposed the need for an 'action plan' to focus on two key themes. First, the ending of police repression through the abolition of police stop-and-search powers and greater police accountability to the local communities they served. Second, Militant used the opportunity provided by the riots to reiterate the underlying importance of its own economic programme in addressing the causes of racial inequality.

"The fight to defend the people of Brixton is part and parcel of the fight to bring down the Tory government. It is a fight against big business and the rotten conditions produced by a system based on private property and the anarchy of the market".¹²²

Militant adopted similarly exclusive economic approaches to the extension of social rights for lesbians and gay men. In his 1986 study of the Militant Tendency, Michael Crick suggested that Militant was 'anti-homosexual', that it lacked any out-gay members, and regarded homosexuality as a 'problem which would disappear' under true revolutionary socialism.¹²³ While Crick was undoubtedly correct in revealing that Militant had failed to produce a clear gay rights policy, particularly in the early-1980s, his conclusions cannot be fully substantiated. The record of Militant's campaigning during the late 1980s and 1990s on this issue appears to suggest that, if anything, the Tendency was one of the few political groups outside the gay movement prepared to advocate significant extensions of social rights for lesbians and gay men. Nonetheless, Militant continued to adhere to its fundamental claim that all forms of discrimination, whether on grounds of race, gender, or sexuality, could only be eliminated through the establishment of a socialist society founded on its own core economic principles.

During the Conservative government's third term, two pieces of legislation were introduced which extended the bounds of criminal law in the field of gay rights. The first – section 28 of the Local Government Act (1988) – prevented local education authorities from teaching children that same-sex relationships were morally 'equivalent' to heterosexuality. The second – section 31 of the Criminal Justice Act (1991) – criminalised public displays of affection between men. Both pieces of legislation provided Militant with renewed opportunities to mobilise opposition to the Conservative government.

¹²² Militant 17.04.81

¹²³ Crick (1986), p.90

Militant developed a radical agenda with regard to lesbian and gay rights, symbolised by its support for the equalisation of the age of consent to 16, the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the armed forces, and the provision of accurate and unbiased safer-sex education in schools. But Militant continued to regard solutions to homophobia as being economically driven rather than socially determined. On occasion, their remedies merely reinforced wider social prejudice. For example, by stressing the need for additional funding into the ‘treatment and care of HIV *carriers* and Aids patients’, the Tendency reinforced the misleading stereotype of HIV/Aids as a ‘gay plague’ rather than an issue which affected all sexually active people irrespective of orientation.¹²⁴ That aside, Militant’s approach to homosexuality mirrored its short-sighted universalist philosophy towards discrimination – that capitalism encouraged social injustice and that only a socialist society would ‘destroy’ it.¹²⁵

The ideological centrality of Militant’s economic programme also shaped its response to the growing popularity of ‘green politics’ during the late-1980s. Thus far, Militant had failed to make any significant policy developments in this area, and the Tendency continued to view the cause of global climate change resting on the prevailing system of capitalism and the profit motive of multinational industries. Tim Harris suggested that

“Only socialist planning offers a solution. This means taking the economy out of the control of big business who are profiting from the destruction of the planet. The monopolies must be nationalised under democratic workers’ control and management. In a world socialist federation based on true international co-operation, economic growth and a cleaner, safer world would both be possible”.¹²⁶

During the 1990s, the environmental pressure groups began to diversify their political agendas by targeting animal welfare and the cancellation of environmentally damaging road-building programmes in favour of a sustainable integrated public transport system. Militant’s youth wing paid particular attention to animal rights, suggesting that animal welfare could only be guaranteed by the immediate nationalisation of pharmaceutical companies engaged in laboratory testing, ‘because profit not progress is their primary motive’.¹²⁷ By emphasising the importance of its own economic priorities, the Tendency

¹²⁴ Militant 12.04.91, 06.03.92 – author’s emphasis

¹²⁵ Militant 06.03.92

¹²⁶ Militant 10.03.89

¹²⁷ Militant 26.04.91

advanced different perspectives from established green groups. As Cathy Hartley concluded, rather than viewing animal welfare as a predominantly 'moral' issue, the exploitation of animals should be regarded as an economic by-product of 'our exploitation under capitalism'.¹²⁸

Militant responded to government proposals for the construction of new roads through countryside areas with similar emphases on economic alternatives. During the mid-1990s, government plans were delayed by the activities of 'Eco-warriors' who occupied a number of sites, most publicly near Newbury, Leytonstone and Twyford Down.¹²⁹ In defending the activities of pseudo-anarchic groups like 'Reclaim the Streets', Militant seized the opportunity to re-assert its own economic solutions to important questions of transport policy. The Tendency opposed the privatisation of Railtrack¹³⁰ and contended that the environmental problems caused by traffic congestion could only be tackled by the development of an adequately integrated transport system founded on the nationalisation of all rail and bus companies.¹³¹

European integration and the development of the European free market were issues of secondary importance to the leadership of Militant. During the 1980s and 1990s, Militant adopted an ambivalent 'neither-In-nor-Out' approach towards questions of supranational integration. Although Militant shared the Labour Left's broad desire for the development of an united Europe founded on core socialist principles, the Tendency refuted the importance that the Left attached to the democratic accountability of institutions and the retention of national sovereignty in economic and financial affairs.

Militant's ambivalence towards Europe flowed from its perspectives towards British withdrawal. Although Militant policy would clearly involve Britain's eventual suspension from the European Community, the Tendency did not share the enthusiasm for withdrawal shown by other party activists, claiming that 'to leave the EEC would not solve anything'.¹³² Militant voiced the widely held belief that withdrawal would harm

¹²⁸ Militant 20.05.94

¹²⁹ Byrne (1997), pp.145-7

¹³⁰ Militant 25.08.95

¹³¹ Socialist 07.02.97

¹³² Militant 18.05.79

British exports and, therefore, would affect British jobs. Leaving the European Community would 'be as great a disaster as staying in' and the pursuit of an isolationist policy suggested that, at least in the short-term, the British economy would jump 'from the frying pan into the fire'. As Pat Craven concluded,

"The fundamental error the Labour leaders make is that they see the Common Market rather than the capitalist economic system as the root cause of Britain's industrial decline. Neither in nor out of the EEC is there any future for the British economy...Rather than just condemning the Common Market...Labour leaders should be putting forward the class arguments against the capitalist nature of the EEC and campaigning throughout Europe for a Socialist United States of Europe".¹³³

Militant made little substantive response to the growth of European integration following the ratification of the Single European Act in 1987. The Tendency repeated its long-held viewpoint that capitalism could not ultimately provide for European unity, and that if Britain 'were outside the EC its exports to Europe would have to bear the external tariff' which would 'ruin' its economy. Only a programme of nationalisation of Europe's leading industrial monopolies under workers' control and management could 'realise the advantages of a single market of 324 million'.¹³⁴ Although the Tendency appeared to support the development of a common European Social Charter, it concluded that the Commission's proposals were 'limited' because workers' rights could be better reinforced by imposing a working time directive 'not of 48 but 35 hours' each week. Militant dismissed the new European social dimension as safeguarding 'the most powerful capitalist countries against being undercut by cheap labour economies'.¹³⁵

Militant responded to the emergence of Euro-scepticism in the 1990s by repeating its fundamental claim that a united Europe founded on capitalism, rather than socialism, would reap few economic rewards. The Maastricht ratification crises provided Militant with the chance to mobilise grassroots antipathy to an extension of European economic and political integration. Militant supported the demands for a British referendum and urged its supporters to oppose the provisions of the Treaty. This was a course of action rejected by both the Conservative government and the Labour front-bench. Militant's enthusiasm for a referendum to 'raise the alternative of a Europe run by and for working people' became an opportunistic instrument for its underlying objective for 'a socialist

¹³³ Militant 18.06.82

¹³⁴ Militant 09.12.88

¹³⁵ Militant 13.12.91, 19.06.92

united states of Europe in which real co-operation and harmony could be achieved'.¹³⁶ At its re-launch in February 1997, the Socialist Party retained this approach by saying 'no to Maastricht' and calling for the 'solidarity of the European working class', but provided no practical alternatives as to how this could be achieved.¹³⁷

The Militant Tendency supported unilateral nuclear disarmament throughout the 1980s until the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 rendered unilateralism largely extraneous to the emergent priorities of the new world order. However, like its social policy, Militant's support for the peace movement was cultivated out of broader strategies, in this instance, to utilise the groundswell of anti-nuclear support exhibited by CND at USAF bases at Greenham Common and Molesworth. Although Militant was visibly committed to unilateral disarmament, it was for economic rather than for humanitarian or environmental reasons, conflating disarmament with the need to reduce defence spending to fund its own economic priorities. Militant frequently denied the realities of nuclear proliferation, arguing that 'to destroy the working class, which nuclear war would mean, would be to destroy the goose that lays the golden egg'. Even during the 'hottest' part of the Cold War, Militant leaders found it difficult to contemplate the outbreak of nuclear hostilities between the superpowers, claiming that only 'totalitarian fascist regimes, completely desperate and unbalanced' would consider the use of nuclear weapons.¹³⁸ Peter Taaffe confidently predicted some years before that 'a war between Russia and the capitalist west is completely ruled out for the foreseeable future'.¹³⁹

Although Militant shared CND's desire for the immediate cancellation of Trident and Polaris nuclear programmes, it criticised the peace movement for failing to incorporate economic and class perspectives into unilateralism, asserting that that disarmament could 'not be achieved on a lasting basis under capitalism'. During the Falklands War, Militant alleged that some CND patrons 'backed the war' because it was fought exclusively with conventional weapons and, as a consequence, they assisted in the defence of 'the prestige of the Thatcher government and British capitalism'. Moreover, Militant repeated its claim that 'in the immediate period, nuclear war between the superpowers is ruled out - neither

¹³⁶ Militant 19.06.92

¹³⁷ Socialist 07.02.97

¹³⁸ Programme of the International (3rd ed.), January 1980, p.16; see also Crick (1986), p.86

¹³⁹ *Militant International Review*, 15, Autumn 1978, p.24

would gain from a world obliterated by nuclear holocaust [and] by setting off a nuclear war the superpowers would destroy the foundations upon which their wealth and privileges exist'.¹⁴⁰ Militant appealed directly to CND activists (via Labour's Young Socialists) to provide a class-lead to unilateralism, asserting that disarmament could only be realised through truly working-class social movements:

"...in the epoch ahead only on the basis of a series of massive defeats for the working class movements in a number of major capitalist countries with the consequent coming to power of extreme militarist police state regimes, would the possibility emerge of a third world [nuclear] war".¹⁴¹

Militant opposed Labour's gradual abandonment of unilateralism following the 1987 election. The Tendency claimed that party policy had, in fact, become a rather ineffective blend of 'unilateralism, bilateralism and multilateralism'. Adhering to traditional perspectives, Militant reiterated that nuclear war had been avoided thus far, not through a balance of mutual 'terror' between the superpowers, but because global capitalists sought to avoid the annihilation of 'themselves and their markets'. Michael Roberts concluded that

"[Labour] conference should not only oppose the policy review and support unilateralism. We need a programme for the immediate decommissioning of nuclear weapons, the withdrawal of US bases, the trade unionisation of the armed forces...the arms industries should be brought into public ownership".¹⁴²

The emergent rapprochement between East and West after November 1989 led Militant to downgrade unilateralism in favour of other priorities. After 1990, most references to unilateralism were completely excised from its programme. Although this apparent shift may have been a function of Labour's own abandonment of disarmament, Militant emphasised markedly different priorities for the attainment of world peace. Rather than advocating unilateralism or nuclear non-proliferation, Militant stressed the need to work for the restoration of democratic workers' rule in Russia and the creation 'a socialist world where hunger, poverty, the threat of environmental destruction and world war can finally be abolished'.¹⁴³ By 1996, nuclear disarmament had become part of 'other

¹⁴⁰ Militant 04.06.82

¹⁴¹ LPYS (1982)

¹⁴² Militant 29.09.89

¹⁴³ Militant 02.04.93

savings'¹⁴⁴ and, in a significant departure, the seventeen ideological principles of the new Socialist Party contained no mention of unilateralism, nor did it advance any strategy for the non-proliferation of nuclear technologies in the developing world.¹⁴⁵

The Militant Tendency made few substantive alterations to its prevailing ideological orthodoxy in light of the reforms of policy occurring at the party-level in the late-1980s and early-1990s. Militant retained its strict adherence to the two axioms of Trotskyite political thought – the ‘transitional’ qualities of its programme for eventual workers’ revolution, and the strategic importance of entryism and infiltration into mainstream social movements of the Left. The extreme-left continued to reduce all political issues to economic and class perspectives, and while Militant made some superficial progress in the diversification of its agenda to accommodate dimensions of social policy, it did so for purely opportunistic and populist reasons. In all areas of social policy, Militant continued to advance the primacy of its five key economic principles, and suggested that solutions to discrimination and social injustice would only be delivered through the creation of a socialist society founded on the ‘rubble’ of global capitalism.

The other constituent elements of the Labour Left responded very differently. The hard-left Campaign Group reacted to the ‘shifting sands’ of ideology at the party-level by circumscribing its programme in some areas, typically where its policy goals had become outdated or electorally unsustainable, whereas it re-radicalised its agenda on other questions. Although the hard-left publicly opposed most major aspects of the Policy Review, the Campaign Group programme was tempered in a number of key areas, notably regarding the universality of public ownership, withdrawal from Europe, and unilateral disarmament. The hard-left continued to diverge from the mainstream thinking of party leaders in several important respects. The Campaign Group retained its commitment to re-nationalise the major public utilities. Although the hard-left acknowledged the importance of ‘constructive engagement’ with Europe, the Campaign Group helped to reinforce the nationalistic sentiments of Conservative Euro-scepticism by supporting a referendum campaign to overthrow Maastricht and halt the inevitable acceleration in transferring legislative powers from Westminster to Brussels.

¹⁴⁴ Militant 29.11.96

¹⁴⁵ Socialist 07.02.97

The Tribune soft-left were unlike other groupings of the Labour Left. After 1985, the soft-left made sweeping policy moderations across the spectrum of policy, and provided important sources of legitimacy for the ideological reforms underpinning Labour's Policy Review. Tribunites publicly endorsed the new orthodoxy of social ownership and market regulation in place of their traditional commitments to nationalisation and state intervention. The soft-left also abandoned its isolationist European and disarmament policies, and followed party leaders by accepting looser multilateral alternatives and the need for more open and constructive European platforms. However, the extent of policy shift by the soft-left meant that, by 1992, it had become virtually impossible to demarcate the Tribune position from that of Labour's parliamentary leadership. Party-level ideological reform caused Tribune to lose most, if not all, of its ideological distinctiveness.

The differential responses of Labour Left groups to the new ideological 'playing field' at the party-level reinforced its own fragmentation and decline. The Policy Review and later moderations had a remarkably fragmenting effect on the Left. The maintenance of identifiably distinct policy agendas showed that the Left continued to lack a common ideological purpose. More importantly, this implied very different outcomes for its various groupings. Whereas the acquiescence of the Tribune soft-left was rewarded by leadership patronage and their slow absorption into the echelons of the party elite, the ideological intransigence of the hard- and extreme-left communities simply intensified their continuing isolation from the mainstream of the party.

5

The Demise of the Branch-Mass Party: Labour's organisational transformation and the atomisation of grassroots membership

*'The politics of organisation is equally as important as the politics of ideas'.
first BBC Television interview with John Prescott as Deputy Prime Minister;
Breakfast with Frost, 4th May 1997*

The form of organisation and structure of a political party heavily pre-determines the extent to which sub-groups and factions are free to mobilise opinion and command institutional power. The diffusion of power, either between different institutions or between different factions and tendencies, often encourages the propagation of competing ideological priorities and electoral strategies. The existence of factionalism, therefore, is strongly associated with the organisational balance of power within political parties. As Labour strategists identified after the 1983 defeat, the co-existence of Labour Left factionalism and electoral isolation suggested that party leadership needed to reassert centralised organisational control over the organisation – primarily to effect the sustainability of Labour's own project for ideological modernisation and the broadening of its electoral appeal. Thus, the eradication of structured factionalism necessitated an organisational transformation that fundamentally altered the prevailing balance of power between party leaders and the rank-and-file of its grassroots membership.

This chapter makes several important contentions. First, in examining the various classical and contemporary models of party organisation within political science, it appears that the modern-day form of the Labour Party bears a striking resemblance to a range of theories located within the Downsian literature of democracy and inter-party competition. The traditional theories of organisation, which revealed Labour as a branch-mass party supporting a homogenous membership, regularly controlling the actions of party leaders, have become unquestionably outdated. Instead, the Labour Party of the 1990s demonstrated the extent to which its leaders centralised control in their own hands, reducing and atomising the collective power of grassroots membership. In doing so, the contemporary theories of party organisation which point to the emergence of

electoral-professional, catch-all and cartel parties, appear to demonstrate greater and more immediate theoretical validity.

Second, to test whether these theoretical assumptions may be realised in practice, this chapter considers the far-reaching consequences of the organisational reforms undertaken by successive party leaders during the 1980s and 1990s. In overcoming the constraints imposed by the paralysis of leadership following Labour's election defeat in 1979, it is important to examine the means employed by leaders in reasserting centralised control over party organisation, and the emergent atomisation of grassroots membership this involved. Moreover, these recent alterations to the balance of power between leaders and party members play an important part in allowing us to understand the progressive decline of organised left-wing factionalism in the Labour Party.

The modern political party relies on structured organisation in order to utilise the multitude of socio-political, economic and cultural resources available to it. Generally speaking, irrespective of whether a party is activist or elite-led, financed by its grassroots members or by outsiders, holds the reins of government or is in opposition, it will display one central tendency. Political parties maintain organisational structures designed to facilitate electoral participation, encourage inter-party competition, and exploit a range of available resources in order to do so.

Within political science there exist a number of different theoretical approaches by which we can appreciate and analyse the development of party organisation. Some of the earlier classic theories of organisation are particularly important in reviewing the evolution of modern socialist branch-mass parties. Classic theories of party organisation remain particularly distinctive from more contemporary and sociological approaches. While the former seek to understand the development of parties, especially the meaning of and institutional prerequisites for democracy, the latter tend to address themselves to how parties are organised as electorally competitive units. The restrictions of classic theory are evidenced by its limited empirical applicability. Although they often prove useful in informing us as to the origins and early development of parties, their central assumptions fail to account for change and transformation. The perception of modern parties as constantly evolving phenomena – so important in Downsian theory and the models that flow from it – is juxtaposed with the rather static quality of classic theories of

organisation. Accordingly, while we may learn much from early theory as to the origins and development of organisation in branch-mass parties like Labour, it remains that contemporary theory proves most adaptable in responding to, and accounting for, variation and change.

Classic Theories of Party Organisation

Roberto Michels contended that party organisation led to the oligarchic control of political parties by office-holders, what he referred to as his 'iron law of oligarchy'. Michels suggested that oligarchic control was particularly prevalent in branch-mass parties where ordinary members, in return for subscriptions and levies, were granted certain organisational and decision-making responsibilities.¹ Once party organisation was sufficiently developed, Michels claimed, the presence of office-holders would interrupt the sacrosanct inter-relationships between members and decision-making given the 'inevitable' irresistibility of office-holders seeking to accumulate functional power and authority in their own hands. During the early 20th century, Michels identified two fundamental types of party leadership – of party officers and elected parliamentarians.² Throughout Labour's history, these two sources of leadership have remained institutionally interwoven. The party leadership continues to be drawn exclusively from the party in parliament, and it remains largely the case more than a century on that the balance of leadership power continues to rest with the parliamentary party rather than elsewhere.

An important implication of Michels' iron law of oligarchy suggested that political parties tend to maintain either intra-party factions (the existence of distinctively powerful sub-groups within the organisation) or intra-party tendencies (observable attitudinal patterns among the grassroots membership). Both hinder the control and leadership of a branch-mass organisation. As the history of the Labour Party in the 1970s and early-1980s revealed, the party membership and its sub-groups used party organisation as a vehicle through which to exert and play-out a series of strategic 'moves' with party leaders. The widespread factionalisation of the party's organisational structures, particularly the consideration given to the constitutional nature of the organisation itself, appeared to

¹ Michels (1915)

² *ibid.*, p.84

suggest that neither members (and their factions) nor the leadership (and its supporters) would be sufficiently united to wrestle functional control from each other.

Hence, Michels' claim that party organisation *inevitably* leads to the formation of unified élites which undermine the role of mass memberships, appears to be unsustainable.³ For example, the recent attempts by the Green Party to ignore the imperatives of party organisation would reinforce the misleading nature of this assumption. In the absence of clearly-delineated organisational structure, decision-making remains confused and unclear. Thus, for a party to exist without a large mass membership, the alternative to formal organisational structure may not be internal democracy, but political and organisational anarchy. Equally, whereas Michels may have been correct in contending that the ethos of office-holding served only to fulfil officers' own ends, this would not suggest any inherent incompatibility between leaders and members. While officers can choose to adopt different methods and strategies, this would not necessarily exclude them from participating in a broader consensus as to the overall political and strategic objectives of the party. The nature of officers' own roles does not universally dictate the perceptions they hold, either towards the party or towards its organisational balances of power.

Michels' iron law of oligarchy further implied that party organisations exhibited a certain life of their own:

'The party, continually threatened by the state upon which its existence depends, carefully avoids (once it has attained to maturity) everything which might irritate the state to excess. The party doctrines are, whenever requisite, attenuated and deformed in accordance with the external needs of the party...Thus, from a means, organisation becomes an end'.⁴

But party organisation as an end in itself need not be disadvantageous, either for the party or for its grassroots members. Since officers and leaders are not necessarily large risk-takers, it is more often the case that party élites regard their own role, not of self-preservation but as one dedicated to the protection of the *entire* party organisation. The polarisation of opinion between office-holders and party members typically emerges through fear for the survival of the organisation itself. Equally so, there is no correlation

³ *ibid.*, p.80; Michels distinguishes between different types of leadership superiority – the economic superiority of leaders, traditional or hereditary superiority, and intellectual superiority.

⁴ *ibid.*, pp.370-71

between office-holder power and a disadvantaged and disenfranchised membership. In contemporary politics, it is common for resources to flow towards leadership groups given that they are best placed in the wider political system to utilise them to best effect. To contest that such positioning automatically places party leaders at-odds with grassroots members implies that the interests of officers and members *always* diverge. The prevalence of divergence is strongly dependent on which party, and in which context, the iron law of oligarchy is being examined.

Labour's modern form of party organisation provides little substantive evidence in support of Michels' central hypothesis that the presence of leaders and office-holders encourages the proliferation of unelected officials who exert organisational dominance over collective systems of decision-making. It remains that Labour parliamentarians continue to prevail over Labour's decision-making processes. Unelected officials, while organisationally close to party leaders and MPs, do not in themselves command organisational authority and legitimacy. Furthermore, any official opposition to the demands of members has tended to occur through broader considerations for the party's own organisational survival. If Labour became an 'officialised' party, as Michels suggested would be inevitable, there can be no consequent conclusion that party members necessarily consider alternative, more decentralised structures as means of ending oligarchic control. As a historically 'confederal' organisation, powerfully reflected by Labour's handling of the Militant Tendency during the 1980s, the party would find a system of local élites and the encouragement of local fiefdoms irreconcilable with its own organisational ethos.

In the mid-1950s, Maurice Duverger asserted that there existed two fundamental types of West European political party – branch-mass and caucus parties – whose organisations could be understood by distinguishing between them either as unitary (direct) organisations or as (indirect) confederations of other groups.⁵ Duverger claimed that the caucus party was the oldest identifiable form of party organisation, and existed as a small number of co-opted elite members who controlled affairs locally and liaised with other élites at the national level. The destruction of the social homogeneity of electorates, the emergent desire for democratisation at the turn of the 20th century, and popular demands

⁵ Duverger (1954), pp.17-19

for an extension of the franchise, put caucus parties under considerable structural pressure to develop national forms of party organisation.⁶

Duverger's type of branch-mass party differed from caucus parties in a number of respects. Whereas caucus parties were established within pre-democratic legislatures by political élites, branch-mass parties were created outside the prevailing political system by those denied access to political power. Similarly, while caucus parties were organised on the basis of a system of local élites, branch-mass parties concentrated on the development of mass memberships to provide resources to increase political leverage over the system as a whole. Moreover, whereas the elite caucus normally retained a high degree of local autonomy *viz.* any national organisation it belonged to, branch-mass parties tended to be more heavily regulated from the centre and at the national level.

But, it is Duverger's contention that branch-mass parties are superior forms of organisation that is of particular interest. The pressures of electoral competition and the retention of loyalist support, together with the more extensive range of opportunities open to a branch-mass structure in acquiring essential electoral resources, suggested that caucuses could either transform themselves into branch-mass parties or might gradually adopt many of their organisational traits.

Leon Epstein found the opposite to be true. Rather than regarding the emergence of party organisation as determined by inter-party competition, Epstein contended that modern parties simply responded to the pressures of electoral competition by shaping and altering their organisational structures to suit. The important goal for parties, Epstein asserted, was to acquire solid financial resource bases and, in this respect, interest groups and private individuals might be better placed than grassroots members to provide essential resources and campaigning donations. Moreover, the organisational pressures placed on branch-mass parties to appropriate mandates (for leaders) and establish lines consent (from party members) could act to circumscribe the overall strategic manoeuvrability of party leaders. Therefore, rather than branch-mass parties emerging as the pre-eminent forms of modern party organisation as suggested by Duverger, Epstein

⁶ For a discussion of caucus party organisation see Ostrogorski (1902), especially vol. I, pp.618-23

concluded that it would be the more conservative and elite-driven caucus parties which would predominate in the future.⁷

However, the models of Duverger and Epstein encountered serious predictive failure given their underlying assumption that a single form of party organisation would prevail, and that the existence of inter-party competition revolved around just two types of political party. Their methodologies did not allow for hybridity between the two ideal-types they purported – a problem common in the development of typologies and classifications. The Labour Party serves as a useful example. Although Labour was clearly organised in its early formative years along the lines of the ‘indirect’ branch-mass model rather than caucus structures, over time it has become much less indicative of an organisation based around mass membership. Despite the endeavours of the various groups of the Labour Left during the 1970s and 1980s to strengthen intra-party democracy and the power of grassroots activists, the organisational reforms undertaken since 1983 suggested that Labour became much less representative of Duverger’s ideal-type of branch-mass party. While Labour has not adopted the structures of the caucus party symbolised by its Conservative rivals, the systematic centralisation of power and the creeping atomisation of party membership suggested that Labour had increasingly adopted forms of organisation which were markedly different to those envisaged by classic theorists.

The classic theories advanced by Michels and Duverger suggested a number of important democratic considerations. But their explanatory and predictive power is much reduced. Both types of debate introduced by them – of democracy versus officers and leaders, and the branch versus caucus organisation – examined parties as rather static entities. They might (indirectly) consider aspects of change and transformation, but their conclusions are heavily restricted by assumptions that what will emerge in the future will be more or less a reflection of existing inter-party competition. The classic theories of party organisation neither account for hybridity, nor forms of party structure which bear little observable modern-day resemblance either to the branch-mass or caucus parties to which they portend.

⁷ Epstein (1967)

Contemporary Theories of Party Organisation

The electoral-professional approach to party organisation modelled by Angelo Panebianco contended that the early development of parties may be viewed either through the 'genetic model' (examining the structural origins of parties) or through the 'institutionalisation model' (considering the degree of leadership autonomy over intra-party sub-groups).⁸ Panebianco claimed that modern political parties were formed through territorial penetration (the development of mass membership through localities and regions) or by territorial diffusion (the formation of national party organisation through the convergence of autonomous groups). In this respect, therefore, the Panebianco approach bears a striking resemblance to the Duverger model of branch-mass and caucus party organisation. The early organisational development of the Labour Party revealed it to be

'predominantly due to territorial diffusion and to the spontaneous germination of associations...[which] impedes the formation of strong organisational loyalties. The dominant coalition that forms is, moreover, divided and heterogeneous'.⁹

The Panebianco model of party organisation built upon Downsian theories of inter-party competition, particularly Otto Kirchheimer's contention that modern parties experience systemic pressures to transform themselves into electorally-competitive catch-all parties. For Panebianco, the branch-mass form of party organisation would inevitably cede to electoral-professional organisations, a 'problem' he regarded to be 'of the utmost importance'.¹⁰

"[with] the increasing professionalisation of party organisations...a much more important role is played by professionals (the so-called experts, technicians with special knowledge), they being more useful to the organisation than the traditional party bureaucrats, as the party's gravitational centre shifts from the members to the electorate".¹¹

The modern Labour Party closely resembles Panebianco's model of the electoral-professional party. First, Panebianco suggested that modern parties tend to emphasise the centrality of professionals within the organisation.¹² Since the mid-1980s, party

⁸ Panebianco (1988)

⁹ *ibid.*, p.65

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.262ff

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.264

¹² *ibid.*, pp.229-31

leaders have shown particular enthusiasm to transfer key organisational responsibilities to professionals. The appointment of Peter Mandelson as Kinnock's Communications Director in 1985, alongside the emergence of the Shadow Communications Agency after 1987, demonstrated the willingness of party leaders to cede responsibility to outside experts in the field of media management and public relations. Second, Panebianco asserted that electoral-professional parties directed their campaigning strategy towards those sections of the 'opinion electorate' which displayed little long-term attachment to any given political party.¹³ The intention of the Policy Review sought to build a cross-class alliance with voters beyond its established core constituency of support, reinforced by more effective integration of opinion research into campaigning and communications strategies. Finally, electoral-professional parties tend to demand substantive shifts in the balance of power towards party leaders and elected parliamentarians.¹⁴ The increasing 'presidentialisation' of Labour election campaigns after 1987 and the systematic extension of central leadership power, particularly over the selection of parliamentary candidates, revealed an emergent tendency among party leaders to dominate and exert control over the entirety of Labour's organisation.

The strategy pursued by party leaders after 1987 to rebuild Labour's mass membership lent particular weight to Panebianco's claim that electoral-professional parties strive to re-orient themselves towards opinion electorates. As Paul Webb observed,

"the motivation for the membership drive had less to do with the desire to (re)create a party of mass integration. Rather, it was conceived of as a way for the party leadership to counter a perceived threat to the policy review process coming from many of the CLP activists represented at the party's annual conference...[Its] contemporary significance lies in ensuring that Labour's policies and image never again shift too far away from the ideological centre ground that is so important in winning support".¹⁵

The Panebianco model emphasised that electoral-professional parties often consider the diversification of sources of finance, supplementing existing intra-party resources from members and affiliated organisations with external, even international, donations and new forms of state-based funding.¹⁶ Despite the lessons of the political scandals that engulfed the final months of the Major government, the British political system has yet

¹³ *ibid.*, p.264. The term 'opinion electorate' is derived from the distinction drawn by Parisi and Pasquino (1977) between the 'vote of opinion' and the 'vote of belonging'

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.264-5

¹⁵ Webb (1992), p.283

¹⁶ Panebianco, p.50-53

to adopt systematised methods for the state-funding of parties. Labour's income continues to rely on fundraising and marketing among members, supporters, trade unions, pressure groups, and other private individuals. State-funding remains restricted to the provision of subsidies for the maintenance of parliamentary parties and the reimbursement of limited amounts of election campaigning costs.¹⁷

The legacy of organisational transformation in the late-1980s and 1990s suggested that Labour increasingly resembled the electoral-professional form of party envisaged by Panebianco. Party leaders successfully enlarged Labour's appeal among a more mobile and transient electorate, and it did so by enhancing leadership autonomy through the centralisation of power, the management of party organisation, and the professionalisation of party campaigning strategy. Furthermore, the efforts to reverse the decline in membership while simultaneously pursuing the broadening of its appeal to an increasingly volatile electorate, demonstrated that party leaders conflated organisational transformation with the necessities of electoral competition.

There are some areas in which we are unable to fully apply the Panebianco model to the contemporary Labour Party. The British political system has failed, thus far, to diversify established forms of party funding through the incorporation of regulated state-based financing. Moreover, where the early development of Labour organisation revealed that it was, indeed, born through territorial diffusion and internal trade union legitimisation, Panebianco's 'genetic model' does not explain how and why parties might subsequently consider substituting traditional provision of funding and legitimisation. Although Panebianco's model of the electoral-professional party presented an interesting ideal-type, it appeared to be heavily predicated on the assumption that party transformation is pursued exclusively through the intricacies of the electoral market. Just as the Duverger hypothesis could not explain why party leaders often look to means other than organisational transformation to respond to changing electoral conditions, the Panebianco model suffered from over-simplicity by failing to acknowledge more complex organisational constraints upon party leaders. Alan Ware observed that,

[These accounts] of party organisation development [have] been sought at far too general a level. It is plausible to assume that the kind of structure a party has already will influence the extent and direction of change in that structure; it is also plausible that the

¹⁷ Blackburn (1995), pp.312-19

need to compete for votes exerts pressure on a party to adopt a suitable organisational form...What results is likely to depend on the particular circumstances of a given party'.¹⁸

The sociological models of party organisation propounded in recent research by Richard Katz and Peter Mair afforded particular centrality to the incentives and disincentives for change experienced by party leaders.¹⁹ They suggested that the given form of a party's organisation should be regarded as more complex than either the Duverger or Panebianco explanations accounted for. The Katz-Mair hypothesis centred on three principal contentions. First, that the nature of a party's organisation was inextricably linked with the resources available to it. Second, that organisational transformation demanded the substitutability of those resources. Third, that party leaders engaged in a process of 'cartelisation' by substituting traditional resources for those provided by the state.

The cartel party thesis sought to avoid the static qualities prevalent in classic models of party organisation, appreciating that party structure remained a constantly evolving phenomenon.²⁰ As with the electoral-professional approach to organisation developed by Panebianco, the Katz-Mair hypothesis was built upon Downsian theory of party competition and those specialist theories, like Kirchheimer's catch-all thesis, which were predicated on it.²¹ The cartel model is especially instructive for students of the modern Labour Party. The notion of cartelisation affords a degree of intuitive validity that, in a number of different ways, surpasses the existing base of theoretical work. But the model should be subjected to two important caveats regarding the applicability of its hypothesis to the British case and, therefore, the proximity of the Katz-Mair study to empirical reality.

The cartel party thesis sought to explain Western European (rather than predominantly British) party organisational transformation. Much of the thesis draws on the historical experiences of continental socialist branch-mass parties. Moreover, Katz and Mair regarded party organisation as subject to frequent change and adaptation. The observable trends they suggested may, or may not, be revealed over time. Therefore, there is a need

¹⁸ Ware (1996), p.104

¹⁹ Katz and Mair (1995)

²⁰ *ibid.*, p.9

²¹ Downs (1957); Kirchheimer (1966)

not to over-state one particular case's compliance with the cartel party model. We should not expect the conditions for organisational change implied by Katz and Mair would be observable, or would apply, at all times and across all cases. Indeed, one of the particular methodological strengths of their model was that it rejected the propagation of universal theoretical perspectives.²²

The central argument of the cartel party thesis contended that modern political parties engage in such a wide range of activities that certain exploitable resources should be at their disposal for them to effectively compete with other parties.²³ To appreciate the development of party organisation, it is important to account both for the origins of resources and existing methods of allocation. Since parties usually display different patterns of resource provision and exploitation, there can be no *single* observable form of party organisation.

‘...the mass-party model is tied to a conception of democracy, and to a particular, and now dated, ideal of social structure [un]characteristic of post-industrial societies...the mass party model implies a linear process of party development which, even when elaborated to take account of more recent developments (e.g. Kirchheimer's catch-all party or Panebianco's electoral-professional party), suggests an end-point from which the only options are stability or decay, and which, like all hypotheses of the end of evolution, is inherently suspect’.²⁴

The existence of one party with quantifiably more disposable resources than all others would not necessarily place that party in an electorally advantageous position. The tendency of modern parties to engage in ‘inter-party collusion’, encouraged by the ‘inter-penetration of party and state’, suggested that parties have become ‘agents of the state’ employing state resources ‘to ensure their own collective survival’.²⁵ The provision of state resources not only restricts the emergence of new parties, but also reduces the necessity for party leaders to expand their own mass memberships.

The substitution of traditional resources provided by members, affiliates and supporters for those of the state implies a number of considerations both for party leaders and grassroots members. The development of modern campaigning and fundraising techniques suggests that party officials increasingly diversify ‘resource provision’ in what

²² Katz and Mair (1995), p.5

²³ *ibid.*, pp.15-16

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.6

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.18

Katz and Mair described as the ‘Americanisation’ of politics.²⁶ Whereas grassroots members might strive to retain traditional sources of funding and legitimacy, party leaders often enthusiastically pursue donations from multinational corporations, interest groups and other private individuals, none of whom necessarily wish to become part of a mass membership party. But Katz and Mair failed to acknowledge that the progress of resource substitution could be tempered by the weight of history. Just as party leaders need to consider the importance of alternative resources of party financing, they must also account for the historical and psychological centrality of traditional providers (e.g. the trade unions in the Labour Party) in upholding the political legitimacy of the party. These caveats suggest that resource substitution might be a more gradual, complex and inter-generational phenomenon than implied by the cartel model.

Katz and Mair contended that resource substitution encourages the gradual cartelisation of political parties as agents of the state – a process representing a logical stage in the historical shift away from traditional branch-mass party organisation. Furthermore, they suggested that cartel parties typically emerge out of prior transformations in party structure predicated on the Downsian and Kirchheimer models. In an environment of contained electoral competition, where the distribution of resources becomes increasingly diffuse, emergent cartel parties look keenly towards the more permanent resources available from the state.

The result is a system in which political parties adopt less representative organisational structures. As agents of the state, cartel parties draw upon state-based financing and more privileged lines of access to state-regulated agencies, especially ‘politicised’ state bureaucracies. Although the absence in British politics of state-funded parties and a politicised bureaucracy suggests that the immediate pressures of cartelisation are limited, there are a number of areas where the development of cartel parties may become a phenomenon in the future. State funding of parties was intimated by the Nolan and Neill committees in reaction to the political scandals that plagued the Conservative government after 1992. Also, the recent reforms to the Civil Service have resulted in an increasing propensity of selection boards to appoint senior officials drawn from the private-sector and in the growth of quangos and decentralised agencies run on a market-

²⁶ *ibid.*, p.8

based ethos. While the Civil Service is far from politicised, the recent reforms endured by it suggest that it has become significantly less independent from the domain of politics.

The cartel party thesis advanced by Katz and Mair suggested a number of important trends in party organisational change. Rather than regarding organisation as a static phenomenon, their hypothesis provided a theoretically and intuitively plausible framework for analysis. More importantly, it revealed the extent to which centre-left parties have experienced structural pressures to move away from the branch-mass form to more contained, professional and efficient methods of party organisation and electoral competition. Although the British example may not be entirely compliant with the rigours of the cartel party thesis, in longer-term perspective there appears to some empirical evidence reinforcing the general trends to which it so powerfully referred.

To what extent has Labour engendered a form of organisation resembling the cartel party model, or is it that the process of organisational transformation continued to emphasise the centrality of balance of power considerations intimated by other contemporary theories of party organisation? Labour's constitutional framework came into force in 1918. Since then, its principal organisational components have remained unchanged, albeit that the prevailing balances of power between them have been subject to occasional alteration.²⁷ Throughout, the Labour Party has remained organised around *four* central institutions, each representing clearly delineated constituencies of leadership élites, parliamentarians, delegates and grassroots members.

At the apex of Labour's organisational structure stands the party leadership in which all practical day-to-day political and managerial authority is vested. Over time, the Labour Left was particularly concerned with the organisational inter-relationships between leaders and grassroots members. The strategic success of the Labour Left demanded observable shifts in the balance of power away from leaders, primarily so as to direct the radical politics which it so often professed. But recent reforms meant that party members came to represent a distinct organisational component in themselves. Since the introduction of OMOV in 1993, grassroots members have become more individually empowered in a manner juxtaposed both to the traditional collectivism of membership

²⁷ for a thorough historical exposition of the main organisational elements of the Labour Party and the distribution of power between them see the classic text McKenzie (1963), esp. pp. 295ff.

envisaged by Labour's original constitutional settlement, and to the strategic necessities of the Labour Left. Party membership was framed increasingly in an individualised context where members expressed views and opinions through ballots, referenda, focus groups and thematic policy forums.²⁸ In place of the traditional representative democracy symbolised by delegates, mandates and conference resolutions, New Labour championed a system of direct participative democracy where members were forcibly aligned to an agenda set far-above them at the leadership level, away from the confrontational setting of the conference platform. Party leaders enjoyed mandates delivered to them either through direct ballots of individually enfranchised members, or indirectly through policy forums engaged in 'rolling' programmes of policy development.

Labour's National Executive Committee acts as the constitutional holder of party management functions, responsible for the discharging of its responsibilities to the annual conference. Although recent reforms altered the composition of the NEC and the method for electing its members, most NEC members continue to be elected through direct ballots of party members, trade unionists, and members of the various socialist societies. The centralisation of power after 1987 ensured that the NEC became less organisationally significant. The co-existent decline of the Labour Left meant that the NEC no longer engaged in fractious battles with party leaders to assume control of party organisation and, thereby, dictate the development of party policy.

One of the most important functions of the NEC remains the oversight of the management and administration of the party. Over time, the input of officials and party bureaucrats has become more significant as party leaders focus intently on the efficiencies of party management. Most officials are responsible to Labour's general secretary and they execute the full range of management functions, including marketing and fundraising, membership administration, policy development, international liaison and regional monitoring. Since the late-1980s, the number of officials and advisors has increased significantly and, as Seyd and Whiteley observed, this would only be to the longer term detriment of Labour's other representative institutions.²⁹

²⁸ The individualisation of membership has been advanced by the introduction of OMOV (in 1993) for the annual ballots for the election of delegates to the NEC and the increasing use of referenda to decide key political questions, notably to approve the revision of Clause 4 in 1995 and Labour's draft election manifesto in 1996.

²⁹ Seyd and Whiteley in Smith and Spear (1992), pp.33, 39-41

The 'party in Parliament' exists as the third distinct organisational component, incorporating MPs and Peers within the Parliamentary Labour Party.³⁰ When Labour is in opposition, the PLP elect annually from its own number a Parliamentary Committee to whom the party leader assigns shadow ministerial portfolios. When in government, the leader enjoys established prime-ministerial patronage in the appointment of Cabinet and junior ministers. The daily supervision of MPs remains the responsibility of the PLP, notably Labour's parliamentary whips and the backbench Chair of the parliamentary party.

The party's annual conference remains the most publicly-visible organisational component in the Labour Party, bringing together delegates from the constituencies, trade unions and affiliated socialist societies with Labour's leadership, parliamentarians and local councillors. Over time, the balance of power has evidently shifted away from the party conference, particularly through the emergence of the National Policy Forum and its complicated nexus of policy sub-groups. Nevertheless, significant institutional power remains in the hands of delegates, especially from the trade unions. As Duverger observed, the complex inter-relationships between the party and the trade union movement played an important part in shaping Labour's historically confederal and 'indirect' structures. Despite recent reforms, the trade unions continue to play important organisational and financial roles at all levels of the organisation. A number of Labour MPs continue to be sponsored by affiliated unions, and some activists continue to enjoy the privileges of 'double registration' as individual members and trade unionists. Trade unionists comprise around one-third of the membership of the NEC, and their block votes at party conferences continue to be of the utmost importance both to party leaders and their opponents. The socialist societies also reflect the historical confederalism of the party. Like the trade unions, they send small delegations to the NEC, sponsor several Labour MPs, and are active within the conference arena.

Labour's early organisation was concentrated around a homogenous membership that claimed its collective right to control the actions of the party elite. Party members were actively recruited, either individually or as affiliates. Moreover, party members enjoyed a range of decision-making privileges, while also recognising the important duties and

³⁰ MEPs are members of the European Parliamentary Party (EPLP). In the election of the Leader and Deputy Leader the votes of the EPLP form part of the one-third of total votes cast by parliamentarians.

obligations which accompanied membership of a political party.³¹ During the late-1980s, Labour opened its doors to a much wider range of supporters, conscious of a strategic need to reverse the decline in membership and to attract a broader, cross-class clientele.³² Simultaneously, party leaders emphasised the importance of remaining accountable to the electorate, thus demanding considerable freedom of organisational and ideological manoeuvre. The lines of authority within the party increasingly adopted more vertical directions. The membership reforms surrounding the introduction of OMOV meant that, whereas party members possessed more individual rights than before, their position as part of a collectivised mass-membership was much less privileged. Following the election of Blair in 1994, many of the distinctions between members and non-members became increasingly blurred as Labour invited all supporters, irrespective of formal enrolment, to participate in pre-election campaigning. This was vividly evidenced by New Labour's *Operation Victory* campaign in 1996-7, although party leaders continued to pay lip service to notions of a formal party membership in helping it to deliver a broader and more socially diverse constituency of voter support.³³

The campaign to reverse the decline in party membership began immediately after Labour's third election defeat in 1987. But the leadership needed to ensure that an enlarged membership base would not pose any threat to its own authority, particularly in reviving organised intra-party factionalism. Accordingly, party strategists adopted more atomised conceptions of grassroots participation in which party members determined key political questions via postal 'armchair' balloting rather than through fractious conferences and local meetings. This conception of party membership sought to encourage greater identification with (and allegiance to) the national party, and therefore with national leaders, while actively discouraging the immediate need for local organisation and decision-making. Nowhere was factionalism more evident than in local parties, where local leaders used the vestiges of organisation as extensions of their own political constituencies. As Katz and Mair suggested,

“...it becomes possible to imagine a party that manages all its business from a single central headquarters, and one which simply subdivides its mailing list by constituency,

³¹ For a cost-benefit analysis of Labour Party membership and activism see Seyd and Whiteley (1992), especially pp.59-65

³² Memorandum from the General Secretary to the National Executive Committee, 26.04.86; NEC Organisation Sub-Committee Minutes 1985/6; see also LPACR 1986, pp.55-57

³³ Labour Party (1990), p.9; see also Labour Party (1997a)

region or town when particular sets of candidates have to be selected or when sub-national policies have to be approved".³⁴

In short, the organisational reforms undertaken by Labour since the late-1980s have been heavily predicated on the fundamental assumptions of Downsian theory. Whereas the Labour Party of the early 20th century sought to draw electoral support from one part of a wider system of segmented constituencies and to retain such support over time, the modern party has been forced to compete in the electoral marketplace.³⁵ In doing so, Labour's electoral strategy has become more competitive, conscious of the need to secure voters from a more variegated range of communities. However, whereas Labour has embraced many of the characteristics of Kirchheimer's catch-all and Panebianco's electoral-professional parties, it remains that Labour has yet to fully realise the form and traits of the cartel party thesis advanced by Katz and Mair. Why is this so?

The cartel party model assumed that inter-party competition would be contained. Although commentators have suggested that the ideological distance between the major parties has narrowed over time, the prevailing pattern of electoral competition remains competitive.³⁶ In an environment where parties need to attract broader, less traditional constituencies of support, inter-party competition continues to be fiercest around centrist and floating (non-aligned) voters. The existence of contained competition implied by their model suggests that a limited incentive to compete has been replaced by a positive incentive not to do so. Electoral competition in Britain today may have become much less vigorous, but there is little substantive evidence to suggest that it has become as contained as Katz and Mair claim.

The UK continues to lack the institutional structures necessary for the full cartelisation of parties. British political society does not maintain state-funded political parties, nor does it provide for a politicised state bureaucracy. Without these key characteristics, the ability of party leaders to consider the substitution of traditional resources is limited. Rather than becoming an agent of the state as Katz and Mair predict, the organisational reforms undertaken by Labour in the 1980s and 1990s reaffirmed many of the balance of power considerations central to the catch-all and electoral-professional models of party

³⁴ Katz and Mair (1995), p.21

³⁵ Lipset and Rokkan (1967), p.51

³⁶ for a discussion of the narrowing of economic policy differences between Labour and the Conservatives during the 1980s see National Institute of Economic and Social Research (1990)

transformation. As Kinnock recognised, for Labour to meet the imperatives of Downsian theory by establishing Labour's cross-class ideological appeal, it was essential to end the climate of factionalism and to reassert the universal authority of party leadership over party organisation.

Centralisation of Power and Atomisation of Grassroots Membership

By recognising the need to create a grassroots party membership which identified more readily with the national party and its leadership, party strategists sought to reverse the crisis of organisation which had been so dominant inside the Labour Party since its election defeat in May 1979. In defeat, many party members blamed Callaghan and his colleagues for failing to respond to the aspirations of ordinary working people. Some activists perceived that intra-party democracy had been abandoned under an increasing leadership tendency to ignore resolutions agreed by annual party conferences. At a time when Labour's parliamentary leadership was required to provide some form of opposition to the new Conservative government, many party activists de-recognised incumbent party leaders as occupants of legitimate 'repositories of power'. These crises of legitimacy were exacerbated by the growth in membership of young, white-collar, semi-professional, and public sector workers, who did not share the same 'socialising' experiences of party membership experienced by older members of the party. As Austin Mitchell observed, 'to lead is to betray. Leadership was itself an anti-social act, and an indictable offence. Leaders would sell-out – unless they were stopped'.³⁷

Many of Labour's rebellious new recruits looked to the Labour Left (especially the Bennite Left) to provide opposition to the autonomy of leadership. During the 1970s, many supporters of the Labour Left aligned themselves with an emerging movement inside the party against the established constitutional settlement which, they felt, accorded too much decision-making power to party leaders. Throughout the 1974-79 Labour government, a number of small and highly specialised 'ginger' groups were established to spearhead co-ordinated campaigns against the party's constitutional inadequacies, as they saw them. The most popular of these groups, notably the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, formed the Rank and File Mobilising Committee to create an umbrella organisation to campaign

³⁷ Mitchell (1983), p.35

more effectively for greater intra-party democracy. Crucially, these groups later provided important organisational resources for Tony Benn's challenge for the deputy-leadership in October 1981.

By 1979, therefore, a powerful movement had gathered force in support of constitutional change, primarily to effect a fundamental shift in the balance of organisational power away from de-legitimised party leaders. The Labour Left's proposals centred on three areas of particular importance – the introduction of mandatory reselection of incumbent Labour MPs, the transfer of responsibility to the NEC for the drafting of election manifestos, and extending the franchise for the election of party leaders to the grassroots membership as a whole. Mandatory reselection was designed to make individual Labour MPs more accountable to their local parties. The electoral college proposals to include constituency delegates, trade unionists and members of the parliamentary party, sought to increase the responsiveness of leadership to wider opinion in the Labour movement. Finally, the shifting of responsibility to the NEC for the drafting and preparation of election manifestos was intended to check the personal bias and veto of revisionist and overly pragmatic party élites.

Party leaders have traditionally opposed attempts at intra-party democratisation through fear that such reforms disproportionately favoured a relatively small number of activists who, as John May identified in 1973, typically held radical political opinions relative to the electorate as a whole.³⁸ The accepted view of party leaders also reinforced Ostrogorski's concern that parliamentarians should not be forced to succumb to the will of a party caucus, or be compelled to support mandates without exercising individual political discretion. As Crosland suggested,

“...the voice of moderate opinion in the Labour Party has been drowned by the clamour of an active and articulate minority... We seek to reassert the views of the great mass of Labour supporters against those doctrinaire pressure groups”.³⁹

The proposals for the reform of Labour's constitution were put before the party's annual conference in 1980, and to the special Wembley conference held in January 1981. The introduction of mandatory reselection and the creation of a new electoral college for the

³⁸ May (1973), p.139

³⁹ Crosland, C.A.R., A Manifesto Addressed to the Labour Movement, Private Papers 1959-63, (Ref: 6/1 - Campaign for Democratic Socialism)

selection of party leaders represented the ‘pinnacle’ of Labour Left success thus far.⁴⁰ But, more critically, the conference cemented internal division inside the party. Immediately afterwards, more than twenty Labour MPs resigned from the parliamentary party and joined with the ‘Gang of Four’ senior ex-Labour ministers to form the breakaway Social Democratic Party.⁴¹ Tony Benn concluded that

“this was the end of a historic day – [Wembley was] the product of ten years of work...We have lost the manifesto fight, but we have won the battles over the leadership election and mandatory reselection and this has been a historic, an enormous change, because the PLP, which has been the great centre of power in British politics, has had to yield to the movement that put the [MPs] there”.⁴²

Following the special conference, Callaghan announced his decision to resign as party leader in the hope that, with the existing electoral arrangements still in place, his chosen successor would prevail. Although Healey appeared the most qualified candidate, he was widely repudiated as Labour’s last (and arguably most infamous) Chancellor of the Exchequer. The election of Michael Foot was a second important strategic success for the Labour Left, but it quickly emerged that Foot’s leadership would be unable to resolve the prevailing crisis of organisation and leadership inside the Labour Party. The Labour Left tended to view Foot with some suspicion. Foot was seen to publicly support the Callaghan government, and the new leader was criticised for his rather antipathetic approach towards questions of intra-party democracy. Labour’s right-wing also distrusted him because of his radical stance towards a number of policy questions, including public ownership and nuclear disarmament. Foot rapidly experienced the vacuum of leadership that so dominated Callaghan’s last months as leader. As the former Prime Minister ruefully observed shortly before his resignation, party leaders held ‘as little authority in the PLP as in the NEC – the Left are the masters now’.⁴³

The Wembley special conference failed to resolve the underlying paralysis of leadership and organisation inside the Labour Party, and several key events between 1981 and the 1983 election highlighted the continuing importance of organisational issues in oxygenating intra-party dissent. First, Tony Benn announced in January 1981 that he

⁴⁰ The proposals for NEC control over the Party’s general election manifesto were narrowly rejected by 3,625,000 to 3,508,000 votes; see LPACR (1980), pp.142-48

⁴¹ see Crewe and King (1995), p.76

⁴² Benn diaries 1980-90, p.69

⁴³ Callaghan quoted in Jenkins (1987), p.113

intended to invoke the new electoral college arrangements to challenge Healey for the deputy-leadership of the party. Despite failing to secure Foot's support, Benn proceeded with the contest, and soon enjoyed the support of many local constituency parties and trade unionists. Following a bitter and protracted battle, Healey narrowly secured victory over his left-wing challenger.

Second, the selection of Peter Tatchell by the Bermondsey constituency party to contest the local by-election brought the party leadership into sharp conflict with the Labour Left-dominated NEC. The decision to select Tatchell, despite the leadership's opposition, was promptly turned into a battle regarding the locus of constitutional authority in the endorsement of parliamentary candidates. The devastating defeat for Labour in Bermondsey revealed some of the deeply-embedded structural and organisational problems which the party would face in the forthcoming general election campaign, and beyond.⁴⁴

Third, Foot appeared unable to exert the necessary leadership authority to ensure that the party put forward an election manifesto which would deliver a Labour government. The roots of these problems lay in the NEC's decision to endorse the Left-sponsored *Labour's Programme 1982* that contained radical proposals for unilateral nuclear disarmament, withdrawal from Europe, and widespread extensions of public ownership and economic planning. Notwithstanding the Wembley conference's decision to leave the power of manifesto drafting in the hands of party leaders, much of the 1982 *Programme* was ultimately replicated in the 1983 manifesto.

Finally, the emergence of the Militant Tendency in some local inner-city constituency parties alarmed many Labour MPs, particularly after the NEC failed to take long-term action to eradicate Trotskyite entryism and infiltration during the 1970s. A coalition of centre-left and centre-right MPs ensured that an initially reluctant party leadership endorsed proceedings against the Tendency. This angered many supporters of the Labour Left, particularly after Foot decided to proscribe Militant and expel several of its most high-profile leaders in 1982. The division caused by the Militant episode continued into the 1983 election campaign, involving High Court rulings and a number of

⁴⁴ For a detailed examination of the events surrounding the Bermondsey by-election and Tatchell's candidature see Tatchell (1983)

alterations to party rules and procedures. More importantly, the proceedings highlighted that the marginal short-term rewards gained from the expulsions could not disguise deeper-rooted structural and organisational deficiencies, and the enduring presence of an organisationally reactive party leadership.

The effect of the constitutional changes agreed at Wembley was not that institutional power shifted uncontrollably to the party outside Parliament, but that it cemented the polarisation of organisation and paralysis of leadership within it. The Labour Left was unable to enforce systems of collective order and central decision-making, rendering it impossible to co-ordinate the activities and aspirations of a newly empowered membership. Labour had become a 'rudderless ship that drifted aimlessly in dangerous seas buffeted by storms'.⁴⁵ The lasting testament of Labour's electoral nadir in 1983 revealed that the strident conviction with which Margaret Thatcher led both her party and her government stood in marked contrast to the uncontrolled and fractious opposition led by Michael Foot.

Neil Kinnock inherited from Foot an unelectable political party in which its two opposing factions were increasingly at war. The new leader quickly identified that internal dissent, organisational defects, and Labour's electoral programme had offended many of Labour's core constituency of supporters. Such weaknesses could only be remedied by concerted action to restore the organisational authority of leadership and the supremacy of the parliamentary party in policy-making, to curb the powers of the National Executive, to marginalise the Labour Left, and expel 'Trotskyite entryists' from the party. These objectives were not immediately realisable. Kinnock commanded limited organisational resources, and presided over a power base of leadership that was broad but very shallow. The new leader needed to overcome four important barriers to organisational modernisation.

First, the Wembley reforms transferred key powers of selection to local constituency activists, as evidenced by the Bermondsey party's selection of Tatchell in 1982. The abandonment of these reforms served as useful starting-point from which to wrestle control away from activists, particularly from the Labour Left. Kinnock proposed new

⁴⁵ Shaw (1994), p.23

systems of selection balloting among local members that effectively terminated the 1981 reforms. To appease the Labour Left, Kinnock recommended that the one-member-one-vote proposals should not be compulsory on all local parties. Despite Kinnock's narrow success in securing NEC approval for his proposals, the Labour Left subjected 'optional OMOV' to universal criticism. The proposals were ultimately defeated at the 1984 conference following the defiance of trade union delegates, especially among representatives from the powerful transport union (TGWU).⁴⁶

Second, Kinnock needed to overcome the problems generated by the Labour Left in local government. The new system of rate-capping of over-spending local authorities, enacted by the Conservative government after 1983, encouraged campaigns of non-compliance from some inner-city authorities controlled by the Left. Since non-compliance was illegal and could lead to imprisonment or disqualification, the party leadership felt compelled to distance itself from some of its most high-profile local government leaders.⁴⁷ At the 1984 conference, a number of motions supporting non-compliance were agreed, most publicly sanctioned by Derek Hatton, the deputy leader of Liverpool City Council and senior Militant activist.⁴⁸ Kinnock found himself caught between two extreme positions. To support non-compliance would excite electorally damaging bad news stories about Labour. The condemnation of senior leaders of local government like David Blunkett in Sheffield, Ken Livingstone at the Greater London Council or Ted Knight in Lambeth, would re-ignite anger from all sections of the Labour Left and might threaten any future alliance between the leadership and the soft-left.

Ultimately, Kinnock decided to oppose the non-compliance strategy, suggesting to local government leaders that it was better to have 'a dented shield than no shield at all'.⁴⁹ Although Kinnock incurred the immediate wrath of Labour's council leaders, the non-compliance strategy pursued by local authorities was, in practice, one of mendacity. Most local government leaders sought to avoid surcharge, bankruptcy and imprisonment.⁵⁰ Rather than damaging those non-compliant authorities led by the Labour Left, the countervailing stance taken by Kinnock and the NEC only damaged the Labour Party as

⁴⁶ LPACR 1984, pp.66-7

⁴⁷ Labour Party (1986a)

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pp.128ff

⁴⁹ *Guardian*, 02.01.85

⁵⁰ In the event, the strategy of non-compliance collapsed after the disintegration of the united coalition in the wake of Livingstone's decision to avoid criminal action by setting a rate for the GLC

a whole. As Lansley suggested, it was a 'phoney war'. Instead of generating popular support against the rate-capping policy of the Conservative government, Labour had effectively 'manufactured a crisis of its own'.⁵¹

Third, party leaders needed to overcome the barriers to modernisation reinforced by the position of the Labour Left inside the trade union movement. The mineworkers' strike during 1984-5 rapidly became the most serious industrial dispute to threaten the Conservative government. Although Kinnock opposed government plans to close unproductive coalmines, the leadership was mindful of Labour's traditional support for the National Union of Mineworkers. Like rate-capping, Kinnock found himself entrapped between two competing positions, neither of which would assist his programme for modernisation and transformation. On one hand, Kinnock did not wish to publicly support the industrial policies of the New Right. On the other, Kinnock was aware that to outwardly support the NUM would encourage media portrayal of Labour as extreme and militant. Also, the party leadership did not share the views of NUM President, Arthur Scargill, that the dispute would mobilise the working-classes and would topple the Thatcher government. As Benn observed at the 1984 conference,

"Kinnock made his conference speech...he got a standing ovation of a most forced kind. Then he himself stopped it...Arthur Scargill had got a spontaneous and passionate ovation, and Neil didn't want comparisons drawn with Arthur".⁵²

The shock-waves of the NUM's disappointing defeat reverberated around the Labour movement, not least that it powerfully symbolised the systematic curbing of trade union powers by a hostile Thatcher government. Party leaders were looked upon to provide some form of comfort to a demoralised rank-and-file membership. With an apparent inability to succeed at the industrial level, many activists looked to Kinnock to deliver electoral victory for them. This supplied important catalysts for later party transformations. The growing reluctance of activists to use extra-parliamentary action in light of the NUM's defeat, whether it be in the constituency, at work, or within local government, provided an important mechanism by which party leaders could further challenge the legitimacy of the Labour Left. But the immediate effect of the NUM's industrial action was to decelerate reform and modernisation. The strike required Labour

⁵¹ Lansley (1985)

⁵² Benn (1992), p.378

to take ‘a year out of the job we should have been doing – renovating policy’, and suggested to many voters that the Labour Party had become simply ‘a union support group’.⁵³

The defeat of the Labour Left, particularly with respect to non-compliance and industrial relations, served to empower party leaders in their drive to bring about significant organisational reform. Kinnock’s style at the 1985 conference became more aggressive and combative, especially in addressing the two potentially fractious issues concerning the reimbursement of NUM fines and the reinstatement of dismissed mineworkers.⁵⁴ Kinnock narrowly secured support from the NEC to reject both proposals, although conference delegates ultimately endorsed reinstatement. In one of Kinnock’s most famous conference speeches as leader, he demonstrated his own security of position by publicly rebuking the Labour Left. As the *Guardian* remarked, by denouncing both the NUM and the Militant Tendency’s leadership of Liverpool City Council, Kinnock had effectively ‘lanced a boil’.⁵⁵

‘I’ll tell you what happens with impossible promises. You start with far-fetched resolutions. They are then pickled into a rigid dogma, a code, and you go through the years sticking to that, outdated, misplaced, irrelevant to the real needs, and you end in the grotesque chaos of a Labour council - a *Labour* council - hiring taxis to scuttle ‘round a city handing out redundancy notices to its own workers...[*Applause*]...You can’t play politics with people’s jobs...[*Applause*]’.⁵⁶

1985 was a watershed year in the organisational life of the Labour Party. The power of the Labour Left had sharply receded, especially within the NEC, and the various left-wing coalitions had fragmented over a range of organisational and strategic issues. The splintering of the Labour Left was so evident that *Tribune* publicly endorsed the ‘realignment of the Left’ to effectively counter the Thatcherite transformation of British society. The Labour Left neither anticipated the extent to which the mainstream of the Labour Party had left it behind, nor had it fully understood that its own crisis was one of tactics as well as one of its own ideology.⁵⁷

⁵³ Interview with David Dimbleby, BBC Television, 05.12.92

⁵⁴ LPACR 1985, pp.153-56

⁵⁵ *Guardian*, 02.10.85; *Observer*, 06.10.85

⁵⁶ LPACR 1985, p.128

⁵⁷ see also Wertheimer (1929)

The position of the Labour Left gradually ceded to more reformist and conciliatory soft-left undercurrents which proved essential in enabling the restoration of leadership control and organisational discipline. Among activists the soft-left was represented by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, in parliament by the Tribune Group, and within the NEC as a bloc led by David Blunkett, Michael Meacher and Tom Sawyer. Labour's right-wing, as well as the hard-left championed by Benn and Heffer, lacked the organisational strength by which to assert organisational leverage over the party. This allowed new coalitions of forces to gather strength largely unchecked and, furthered by leadership patronage, the soft-left joined with party leaders in establishing an alliance at the elite level in support of modernisation and change.

These new relationships between party leaders and the soft-left inside the NEC necessitated compromises and concessions. As discussed earlier, the continuing debate inside the party regarding unilateralism was one area of policy change demanding flexibility on both sides. The legacy of a broad left-wing consensus supportive of non-nuclear strategies suggested that the soft-left might be initially reluctant to abandon unilateralism. For Kinnock, these revocations of policy, agreed at the 1981 conference and re-affirmed in 1984, could rekindle dissent and destroy emergent coalitions in favour of reform. In the event, however, the widespread desire within the party to end disunity and further Labour's electoral revival encouraged concessions from the soft-left in supporting the new multilateralist thinking of party leaders.⁵⁸

A fourth significant barrier to organisational modernisation was provided by nature of policy-making itself within the party. In a report presented to Kinnock shortly after the 1983 election defeat, Labour's research secretary, Geoff Bish, highlighted a number of structural inadequacies in existing policy-making procedures.⁵⁹ First, Bish suggested that the NEC and the Shadow Cabinet had become competing centres of power. Second, Bish identified the growing overload inside party's communication channels, preventing the effective dissemination and enactment of policy. Third, the report concluded that the party had failed to recognise and adapt to the important strategic role played by opinion research. Consultation on policy tended to be sporadic and occurred at too late a stage in the development process. To address these problems, Kinnock abolished most of the

⁵⁸ Tribune 26.09.86

⁵⁹ Labour Party (1983b)

NEC's complex hierarchy of sub-committees and study groups, replacing them with joint NEC-Shadow Cabinet policy committees to resolve outstanding policy disagreements. These reforms gave the NEC an institutionalised role in policy-making, albeit only as an adjunct of (and facilitator for) party leadership. By 1987, most organisational responsibilities for policy-making had passed to the leadership and Shadow Cabinet. Senior front-benchers dominated the NEC through the holding of key committee chairs, whereas other leadership loyalists ensured that policy decisions made elsewhere were routinely endorsed.⁶⁰

Kinnock also reformed internal party policy-making through the direct appointment of policy advisers and professional officials. Rather than being centrally employed under the direction of the NEC (like the party's own research staff), these new advisers were directly recruited by the leadership and Shadow Cabinet, and remunerated through the Short Fund.⁶¹ Their role was two-fold – either to advise policy committees (and later the Policy Review groups), or to reinforce support for party leaders through deal-making and arm-twisting. Operating outside the formal employment structures of the party, these officials owed their primary loyalty to their paymaster, who controlled their career progression and access to internal power. As Shaw observed, such an influx of outside advisers and strategists represented a concerted attack on the NEC as a 'battering ram of change' and 'rival to the parliamentary leadership'.⁶²

Centralised control over policy-making was also extended through patronage. Although Kinnock was restricted in the appointment of senior Shadow Cabinet positions, he used the opportunity of enlarging the size of his junior front-bench team to expand control over the entire parliamentary party. By 1990, more than one-third of the parliamentary party occupied front-bench positions. This allowed Kinnock to demand unquestioning loyalty to the decisions and policies of the parliamentary party. When Ann Clywd voted against the agreed position of the PLP regarding the Conservative government's defence estimates in October 1988, she was dismissed. Clare Short was forced to resign two

⁶⁰ At the 1990 Conference, the traditional policy-making role of the Annual Conference was further amended by the establishment of Policy Forums and Policy Commissions (with a membership drawn from all levels of the Party, including trade unions) who were charged with conducting a rolling policy-formation programme which could be overseen directly by the leadership; LPACR (1990)

⁶¹ This is a publicly funded grant allocation to opposition parties which the leadership used, supplemented by *ad hoc* contributions from the trade unions, for the purposes of recruiting Party advisers and strategists. See Katz and Mair (1994), p.123

⁶² Shaw (1994), p.111

months later following her opposition to the cyclical renewal of emergency powers in the Prevention of Terrorism Act (1974).

The centralisation of media management furthered the extension of leadership control. Party leaders enjoyed easier access to the media than their critics, particularly to the editorially liberal-left newspapers like the *Guardian* or *Independent*. The development of centralised communications strategies, especially following the appointment of Peter Mandelson in 1985, allowed party leaders to interact with important news journalists who, in turn, could influence the wider electorate and the grassroots membership of the party. Following the 1987 election, the leadership began to use the media as a means of attacking its internal critics. For instance, leaked statements and briefings to selected journalists undermined the positions of both John Prescott and Michael Meacher. Mandelson allowed Prescott's views regarding British involvement in the Gulf War to be described as 'treacherous' and 'self-indulgent', and the *Observer* was encouraged to declare the soft-left 'Supper Club' as an organised conspiracy against Kinnock's reforming leadership.⁶³

Therefore, the significant alterations to the prevailing balance of intra-party power between 1983 and 1987 were effected by the leadership's growing competence in tackling its own organisational paralysis. As discussed above, the vacuum of leadership was exacerbated by the Wembley reforms, by the resurgence of the Labour Left it reinforced, and by the structural characteristics of party policy-making. After Labour's 1987 defeat, centralised control was extended through further reforms to the nature of grassroots membership. This was achieved in two distinct ways. First, by extending leadership control over parliamentary selection, typically the domain of local activists in the constituencies. Second, by the introduction of direct individual balloting, known as one-member-one-vote, which delimited the autonomy of local activists in determining policy, representation and candidate selection.

The nomination of a modestly left-wing candidate, Deirdre Wood, to contest the Greenwich by-election shortly before the 1987 election, suggested to party leaders that the rules governing the selection of candidates should be tightened. The intransigence of the Greenwich party by selecting Wood over the leadership's preferred candidate was

⁶³ *Observer*, 10.02.91

identified as one of the main causes for a safe Labour seat being won by the SDP/Liberal Alliance. The NEC immediately tightened the selection procedures for constituency parties, and created new parliamentary selection panels (appointed by the NEC) to interview prospective candidates and to publish centrally approved shortlists from which local parties could nominate. These new procedures were activated for the Vauxhall by-election in May 1989 when the NEC rejected two hard-left candidates, Martha Osamor and Russell Profitt, by imposing the moderate Kate Hoey in their place. The NEC also turned its attention to the revision of by-election rules where general election candidates had already been selected, giving party leaders renewed powers over de-selection and imposition of approved candidates. These new procedures were used to impose Charlotte Atkins as the Labour candidate for the Eastbourne by-election in 1990 and Derek Enright in Hemsworth in 1991. Kinnock also threatened summary de-selection in the Walton by-election in July 1991 in the event that the local party endorsed Militant activist Lesley Mahmood over Peter Kilfoyle. Mahmood ultimately contested Walton for Militant as the 'Real Labour' candidate. By standing in direct competition to Labour for the first time, Militant signalled that it was prepared to contemplate the abandonment of its entryist strategy.⁶⁴

Having regained control over the selection procedures for by-elections, Kinnock proceeded by reforming the rules governing routine parliamentary selections. The ascendancy of the Labour Left during the late-1970s meant that the NEC rarely intervened to prevent either the selection of hard-left candidates or the de-selection of right-wing MPs. Three new hard-left MPs were returned to Parliament at the 1987 general election.⁶⁵ Kinnock sought to prevent the election of any more. Buttressed by the new soft-left coalition in the NEC, Kinnock consolidated support for further revisions to parliamentary selection procedures. To this end, when Frank Field was de-selected in Birkenhead, the NEC intervened by ordering the contest to be re-run, a strategy which ultimately procured Field's convenient re-adoption.

⁶⁴ These procedures were not used against the Walton local party given that Kilfoyle had already been selected to replace Eric Heffer at the next general election and polling data suggested a Labour victory. But the use of summary de-selection would undeniably have raised the profile of Mahmood and, so close to a general election, this might have made the subsequent expulsions of MPs Dave Nellist and Terry Fields all the more damaging for the leadership. Mahmood retained her deposit [2,613 votes (6.5%)]. Peter Kilfoyle was elected (21,317 votes; 53.1%) with a Labour majority of 6,860. McKie (1992), p.285

⁶⁴ Diane Abbott (Hackney North), Bernie Grant (Tottenham) and Ken Livingstone (Brent East)

Why did the leadership concentrate on constituency selection processes? There are two important explanations for this trend. First, by-elections had become highly publicised media events of national political significance. The party leadership found it increasingly difficult to recover after poor by-election results, as in Greenwich, and recognised the importance of by-election victories as part of wider electoral strategies. Second, the selection of candidates critical of the leadership, or portrayed as relative extremists, militated against the objectives of party leaders in restoring Labour as a moderate political organisation capable of government. Inherently fearful of public and media criticism, it was imperative for party leaders to be seen to combat internal extremism. The ability of leadership to direct the selection of parliamentary candidates was central to the reassertion of centralised control of party management.

The re-introduction of direct balloting proposals in 1988 furthered the centralisation of power within the party. OMOV was designed to extend internal party democracy while simultaneously abating the autonomy of local activists. More importantly, it sought to involve individual (non-active) members in local and national decision-making. In recalling the difficulties of the mid-1980s in introducing 'optional OMOV', Kinnock suggested that the NEC establish 'local electoral colleges' for the selection of parliamentary candidates. By restricting the voting input of trade unionists to forty percent, with the remainder allocated to ballots of individual local members, Kinnock intended to completely remove the autonomy of local activists in determining local representation and delegation. In 1988, the NEC 'encouraged' local parties to use direct balloting for the forthcoming leadership elections and, again, in 1989 encouraged the use of OMOV for the selection of conference delegates. But the system of local electoral colleges was seen to be particularly cumbersome. It was abolished in 1990.⁶⁶ Despite the setback, the NEC resolved to make direct balloting of the membership a mandatory requirement at some point in the near future.

The extension of individual membership rights could not conceal the continuing poignancy of Michels' iron law of oligarchy. The introduction of direct balloting for all parliamentary selections reduced the accountability of local Labour MPs to their local parties, since many of the oversight functions of constituency committees were systematically replaced by increased central control from party headquarters. Direct

⁶⁶ LPACR (1990), pp.9-11

balloting also encouraged the removal of the Labour Left from organisational power inside the party. After 1989, the number of openly left-wing constituency representatives on the NEC declined significantly. Denis Skinner lost his NEC seat in 1992, and the following year Tony Benn was also ousted from the constituency section. The Left's exclusion from the party's decision-making apparatus further prevented it from mobilising grassroots activists and influencing the party's electoral 'message'. Moreover, the replacement of horizontal communication at the local level with new patterns of direct, vertical communication between leader and grassroots member involved the growing redundancy of local political activities as sources of learning and political socialisation.⁶⁷ These trends in organisation potentially had far-reaching long-term implications for party leaders. The reduction of local party power would delimit the ability of leaders to maintain Labour's core constituencies of electoral support at the ballot box. Whereas representative democracy allowed for open debate, direct democracy forced individual members to align themselves (or not) to agenda set far above them at the elite level. By the 1992 election, Kinnock successfully ensured that the authority of the parliamentary leadership had become unrivalled.

During the leadership campaign to replace Kinnock in the summer of 1992, John Smith revealed his intention to review the 'link' between the party and the trade union movement. Smith contended that if Labour did not reduce the importance of union votes in decision-making and selections, Labour could not hope to appeal to affluent, middle-class voters. OMOV represented a direct challenge to the collective strength of trade unions in electoral colleges. The shift towards individual membership also necessitated the reduction of union voting strength at party conferences.

At the NEC meeting in February 1993, Smith proposed that trade unionists should be included in party decision-making *only* as individual members. Initially, the new leader suggested that the leadership electoral college should consist exclusively of grassroots members and parliamentarians, although in the face of widespread opposition Smith later conceded that trade unionists who were also individual members should be given the opportunity to vote. John Prescott played an important role in shaping compromises and concessions with the union movement. The unions continued to cast seventy percent of

⁶⁷ This was also achieved by ensuring that the Party's traditional information newsletter came under stricter central editorial control. *Labour Weekly* was replaced by the quarterly *Labour Party News*. See Heffernan and Marqusee (1992), pp.107-8

votes at the party conference. As Prescott recognised, the trade unions could ultimately defeat Smith's proposals.⁶⁸ By relating the issue of the union link to the expectation of an increase in the size of the party's individual membership, Prescott suggested that trade unionists should be entitled to join at reduced rates, known as 'levy-plus' or 'registered subscription'. Prescott delivered an unexpectedly impassioned speech in support of Smith's proposals, and his speech played an important part in delivering a last-minute narrow majority of conference delegates.⁶⁹ It was also agreed that when individual membership reached 300,000 the balance between union and constituency votes at conference would be reviewed. When this was achieved (in 1995), the existing 70:30 ratio was reduced to parity. As Seyd observed, by undermining the collective voting strength of the union movement, it had 'become in the eyes of the party leadership a limited asset rather than an electoral liability'.⁷⁰

The formal introduction of OMOV in 1993 represented the most significant organisational reform of the Smith 'interregnum'. The structural consequences were far-reaching, especially by reducing activist power and furthering the centralisation of leadership begun under Kinnock. The new levy-plus system limited the collective strength of union activists at the local level. The introduction of direct balloting for the election of party leaders also extinguished the autonomy of constituency delegates. Furthermore, the alteration to the electoral college meant that seven percent of union voting strength was transferred equally to parliamentarians and the constituencies. It was also agreed to reform conference decision-making once individual membership had increased – a modification that would reduce the structural importance of trade unionists and activists at all levels of the party. The intention of OMOV was to 'complete the process of change from an activist-based system of selection to one in which the wider membership alone determined the choice of candidates'.⁷¹

The centralisation of power was extended by restricting the manoeuvrability of local constituency parties in choosing candidates for the next general election. At the 1993

⁶⁸ the size of the union bloc vote in overall conference voting strength was reduced in 1993 from ninety to seventy percent; see Panitch and Leys (1997), p.225

⁶⁹ the 1993 conference agreed to individual votes from trade unions and socialists societies by 48.9% to 48.1%, agreed the introduction of one-member-one-vote for parliamentary selections by 47.5% to 44.3%, and to the introduction of all-women shortlists by 53.8% to 34.9%; see LPACR (1993), p.179

⁷⁰ Seyd (1997), p.63

⁷¹ Butler and Kavanagh (1997), pp.188-9

conference, the party resolved that women-only shortlists should operate in a number of designated marginal seats and Labour-held constituencies where the incumbent intended to resign. The intention was to 'feminise' the parliamentary party and to achieve eventual gender parity. This position was reaffirmed after Smith's death at Tony Blair's first conference as leader. Women-only shortlists would operate in one-half of all marginal seats winnable on a six-percent swing, and in one-half of Labour-held seats requiring the adoption of new candidates.

Although the strategy behind all-women shortlists was clearly well meaning, its introduction fuelled a number of unnecessarily fractious selection contests between party leaders and some grassroots members. In Falmouth, the imposition of Candy Atherton led to the resignation of a number of local Labour councillors. In Slough, the NEC's decision to impose Fiona MacTaggart encouraged the recruitment of a large number of new members opposed to the centralisation of candidate selection. In 1996, two excluded male candidates decided to invoke legal proceedings against the party, claiming that all-women shortlists contravened the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and the 1976 European directive on equal treatment. Unfortunately, the NEC decided not to appeal against the ruling and the leadership agreed to allow the policy to lapse. Despite the suspension of the policy by allowing on-going selection contests to operate with open-shortlists, local parties continued to endorse the underlying philosophy of quotas and all-women shortlists. By the 1997 election, nineteen women had been chosen in marginal and Labour-held seats, fifteen of whom were selected *after* the suspension of all-women shortlists in January 1996. The unexpected swing to Labour in 1997 added a further eleven women MPs nominated under open-shortlists in seats deemed unwinnable. Although all-women shortlists improved the representativeness of the parliamentary party, it was achieved only at the expense of local party autonomy and marked a further extension of leadership power over the selection of parliamentary candidates.

The introduction of OMOV encouraged wayward local parties to recruit new members to pre-determine the outcome of local selection contests. The media took great delight in reporting that this phenomenon tended to occur in seats with large ethnic populations. In Manchester, activists claimed that party headquarters delayed the processing of six hundred membership applications by Asian supporters, thus preventing the de-selection of Gerald Kaufman in favour of Ahmed Shahzad. Similarly, four Birmingham local

parties were suspended following accusations that the selection processes were unduly influenced by the recruitment of large numbers of Asian and black supporters who had been promised housing improvement grants as inducements. In Bradford, Max Madden was deselected in a confused and fractious battle between rival Sikh and Muslim candidates. In Bethnal Green, Oona King was nominated following the exclusion of Rajan Uddin after a protracted investigation into the membership applications of over two hundred Bengali supporters. The most publicly divisive selection contest, however, occurred in Glasgow Govan where the incumbent MP, Mike Watson, challenged the names of more than twenty new recruits, most of them Asian. The extent of local and national publicity regarding the selection contest, and the NEC's subsequent decision to re-run the ballot in June 1996, reinforced polarisation in the Govan constituency party. Watson was defeated. Local Pakistani businessman, Mohammed Sarwar, was nominated to fight Govan for Labour.

OMOV caused a number of other non-racial selection battles between local parties and the national leadership. In Leeds, the NEC deselected Liz Davies after it was revealed that she held editorial positions with the dissident Left journal, *Labour Briefing*. Opponents claimed that Davies had been disloyal to the party while a Labour councillor in Islington. Davies also held a conviction for non-payment of the poll tax. In Exeter, the leadership removed the approved local candidate, John Lloyd, following accusations regarding his involvement in a South African bomb trial in the 1960s. In Swindon, John D'Avila, the 1992 candidate and trade union activist, successfully challenged the selection of Blairite Michael Wills in the High Court. Despite the ruling, the NEC decided that the widespread division within the local party made another selection contest unfeasible and, in May 1996, imposed Wills as the candidate. Finally, following the defection of Alan Howarth from the Conservatives shortly before the 1997 election, the NEC decided to impose him as Labour candidate for Newport East despite strong local opposition and irrespective of his poor track record in parliamentary selection contests in Wentworth and Wythenshawe.

OMOV was central to the determination of candidate selection and in improving member recruitment. It also proved significant in allowing party leaders to by-pass Labour's traditional decision-making structures through the use of direct referenda. Tony Blair's early decision regarding the revision of Clause 4 and the re-statement of Labour's

aims and values was the first occasion where the leadership decided to appeal directly to grassroots members to measure the party's commitment to further reform. The use of direct balloting to replace the collectivism of constituency party resolutions and the bloc votes of trade unionists undoubtedly allowed the revision of Clause 4 to pass with substantial majorities. Most local parties balloted their members by post. Most trade unions agreed either to do the same, or to poll representative samples of their memberships. At the special Clause 4 conference held in April 1995, Blair secured a majority of trade unionists (54.6%) as well as an overwhelming number of individual party members (90%). Similarly, following the NEC's approval of New Labour's draft manifesto in July 1996, Blair decided to repeat the direct balloting experiment in order to bind the party membership into his programme for government. The ballot on *New Labour New Life for Britain* was held shortly after the 1996 conference. Despite a relatively low turnout (61%), the draft manifesto was overwhelmingly endorsed by 95% of individual members.

The centralisation of Labour's campaigning and communications strategies further reduced the role of local parties and activists. The development of national fundraising campaigns to pursue party members and supporters for donations inevitably reduced the ability of local parties to obtain important sources of funding by using traditional doorstep and mailing techniques. The creation of a central marketing department and a large call-centre team provided long-term regular donations from members and supporters by standing order and direct debit contributions. Between 1995 and the 1997 election, more than £10 million was raised for the campaign in this way, supplemented by the 'Thousand Club' which generated a further £10 million from wealthy individual supporters.⁷²

The emergence of an alternative headquarters staff to the officials based at Walworth Road aroused particular concern at the unrelenting pace of Blair's centralisation of leadership. Charged with overseeing Labour's news and media management, hundreds of party officials were employed (under the direction of Peter Mandelson) to co-ordinate Labour's new media centre on Millbank. To many activists, this reinforced perceptions of New Labour as a party increasingly dictated to by unaccountable 'spin-doctors' and image-makers who considered almost any policy initiative in order to gain electoral

⁷² see NEC Report (1997), p.18

support. There were two centrepieces to the 'Millbank machine'. First, the Rapid Rebuttal Unit to oversee the repudiation of damaging news stories by using computerised archival material from the Excalibur database. Second, the Key Seats taskforce managed by the General Election Co-ordinator to target floating voters in the 92 marginal seats which Labour needed to win on a six-percent swing. The significance of the growth of Millbank lay in the extent to which party leaders were prepared to marginalise its traditional headquarters staff to establish a powerful (and often covert) alternative bureaucratic elite of loyal officials whose role became another adjutant for Blair's extended authority.

Shortly before the 1997 election, the party leadership published its proposals to reform the structure of party policy-making. Conscious of the need to maintain intra-party discipline in government, Blair sought to make a number of important changes to the organisational character of the party, emphasising the role of the NEC and party conference as 'partners' to the Labour government rather than sources of conflicting opinion.⁷³ The *Partnership in Power* proposals substantially altered the prevailing balance of power between the leadership and grassroots membership. The composition of the NEC was enlarged through the inclusion of three government ministers and two representatives of Labour local councillors. More importantly, the reforms introduced 'rolling' two-year programmes of policy development to integrate new decision-making institutions. A new Joint Policy Committee would be established with equal numbers of government and NEC representatives to 'oversee' party policy development. A National Policy Forum of 175 representatives was also proposed to scrutinise policy reports from the JPC and to deliver them to annual conferences. Both institutions effectively delimited the organisational manoeuvrability of the NEC and the supremacy of party conference. By determining the parameters of party policy elsewhere and by creating new two-year cycles of policy deliberation, the ability of party conference to debate issues of concern to grassroots activists was undeniably restricted. Although the proposals stressed the continuing institutional 'sovereignty' of party conferences, it was clear that the powers of policy-making had been irretrievably settled in favour of party leaders and those most loyal to them.

⁷³ Labour Party (1997a)

The legacy of the systematic centralisation of leadership power, and the emergent atomisation of grassroots membership it involved, meant that New Labour represented a markedly different kind of political organisation to that envisaged by classic theories of party organisation. The transformation of the Labour Party into an electoral-professional catch-all party, built upon the precepts of Downsian theory of democracy and electoral competition, necessitated the demise and emasculation of traditional representative structures typical of the branch-mass party of the early 20th century. By altering the prevailing balance of power, party leaders assumed unrivalled control over the development and communication of party policy, and in the selection of candidates. No longer was it organisationally possible for caucuses of activists, however representative they were of political opinion inside the party, to use Labour's local or national organisation to further their ideological programmes and to select the candidates they supported. New Labour was transformed into a 'top-down' party where all organisational resources and lines of authority flowed directly towards party leaders. By reasserting the autonomy of leadership, and by undermining the collectivism of grassroots structures of participation, the modern Labour Party engendered a form of organisation in which the opportunities for a revival of structured Labour Left factionalism appeared virtually unattainable.

6

The Organisation of Factionalism: Distinguishing between different types of Labour Left

Political scientists concerned with the study of parties as competitive organisations frequently allude to the importance of factions and factionalism in understanding the distribution of power and the structural relationships between the various organisational components inside modern political parties. Yet the systematic analysis of factions as distinctive organisational groups at the sub-party level is regularly ignored.

“This is especially true in the context of the enormous body of literature devoted to phenomena of organisation and competition for power, where by far the largest share of attention has gone to political parties...Yet factions are a prominent feature of the political arena, and their predominance in at least a few national political systems makes development of faction study a matter of considerable importance”.¹

The predominance of party study occurs, in part, because such organisations are more readily observable both in terms of structure and activity. Moreover, they are seen to perform more valid democratic functions for the polity at large. Relative to factions and other groups at the sub-party level, mature political organisations are afforded greater legitimacy as positive assets in the wider political system. Factions, on the other hand, are seen to be divisive and clandestine organisations, typically composed of disaffected activists bent on wresting organisational control away from party leaders so as to pre-determine the ideological direction of the party and to secure the selection of ‘sympathetic’ candidates.

This chapter intends to redress the apparent methodological void in the study of factional groups as distinctive organisations at the sub-party level through an examination of key structural differences between the different Labour Left groups operating inside (or in close proximity to) the Labour Party. First, this chapter discusses

¹ Belloni and Beller (1976), p.530

the various theoretical approaches to the study of factional organisation and, in particular, reviews the importance of the typology of sub-group organisation propounded by Richard Rose in his 1964 study of dissent inside modern British parties. Second, this chapter contends that the post-1979 Labour Party, in fact, contained the three ideal-types of factional organisation advanced in Rose's model. Rather than perceiving the Labour Left as an homogenous whole, typical of the less rigorous studies of Left dissent, we should instead regard the post-1979 Labour Left as composed of a number of divergent groups displaying markedly different organisational traits. Finally, this chapter suggests that broad pattern of fragmentation and decline of the Labour Left since the 1980s revealed how the resurgence of centralised leadership at the party-level, discussed earlier, effected the wholesale destruction of both loose *and* structured forms of factional organisation.

Theoretical Approaches to Factional Organisation

Factional groupings have played important historical roles in the organisational evolution of modern political parties. William Chambers' study of the origins of the Hamilton Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans revealed that, as the early American political system developed, fully-fledged political parties evolved out of factional groups. Although Chambers implied that there existed an organisational continuum running between the factional group (or 'proto-party') and the mature form of political party, Chambers contended that these two types of organisation displayed mutually distinctive organisational structures.

Chambers viewed political parties as formal, visible organisations with stable, regulated procedures and structural relationships. Over time, parties maintain highly durable organisations which exist from election-to-election and transcend a range of issues and ideologies. Conversely, Chambers regarded the organisation of factional groups as typically loose and 'semi-visible', irregular and often unstable. Factions usually evolve through unconscious behaviour by their adherents. In contrast to parties, factional groups tend to be relatively short-lived organisations, politically 'visible' for only brief periods, maybe for a single election or for an isolated political issue. Thereafter, factions

often disappear, either on a permanent basis or until they subsequently re-group as fledgling political parties.²

Rather than factional groups being *pre-party* organisations, as suggested by Chambers, it is often the case that modern factions emerge out of pre-existing structures as *intra-party* units representing sections of the party elite, its legislative representatives, grassroots membership, or voting electorate. In contemporary politics, factions are organisational ‘by-products’ of pre-existing lines of conflict within political parties. Within a political environment increasingly dominated by highly stable party systems, where the number of parties actively engaged in inter-party competition remains constant for long periods of time, the model of faction organisation as ‘pre-parties’ appears much less sustainable. Instead, the existence of factionalism suggests deeply embedded lines of internal dissent within a political system where the possibility for the growth of new parties is heavily tempered.

The identifiable characteristics of modern factional organisation are also more developed than Chambers suggested. Although factions normally display less co-ordinated activity than parties, they should be regarded as more than transient groups of individuals inclined towards political conflict. Ralph Nicholas observed that factions operated according to fundamental ‘leader-follower’ relationships, whereby organisational roles are well-defined and reinforced by mutual self-interest. Factional members also generate important reservoirs of support for faction leaders in parliamentary and intra-party conflicts, whereas faction leaders provide positions, funds and other instruments of patronage to loyal adherents. But Nicholas’ assertion that the durability of factional organisation depends on the ‘life’ of its leadership – unlike political parties – appears over-exaggerated. Factional groups often endure well beyond their founders, although it is unlikely that they will maintain the same degree of long-term durability as evidenced by mature political parties. Nonetheless, Nicholas is undoubtedly correct in his conclusion that the primary *raison d’être* of factions is to exist as conflict groups supporting organisational structures designed to amalgamate various combinations of political interests.³

² Chambers (1963); Chambers (1969)

³ Nicholas (1965)

These studies assumed an apparent structural similarity between factional groupings. In practice, however, we find that factions display *varying* degrees of organisational solidity. Some intra-party factions are highly structured organisations with clearly demarcated leadership groups and grassroots memberships, such that they may be regarded as ‘mini-parties’ in themselves. Other groups are much more loosely arranged alliances of individuals who meet to discuss issues of common concern, but stop short of operating structures to bind adherents together in demanding loyalty to the aims and objectives of the faction. Modern British political history has revealed a rich tapestry of different forms of factionalism and dissent inside electoral parties. We might recall the division of the Liberals in 1886, 1916 and 1922; among the Conservatives after 1900, in 1940 and throughout the 1990s; and within the Labour Party in 1931, 1951 and after 1981. Richard Rose’s study of factional groups, published in 1964, sought to account for the apparent variation in sub-group organisation. Within political parties, Rose identified the existence of three ideal-types of sub-group, which distinguished the consciously organised ‘faction’ from looser structures of ‘tendencies’ and temporary ‘ad-hoc’ issue groups.⁴

Rose defined political factions as identifiable groups of individuals within parties ‘who seek to further a broad range of policies through consciously organised political activity’ over extended periods of time. Factions normally profess discernible ideological principles to which supporters should declare their adherence, alongside clearly demarcated leaderships or elite groups who exercise control over the factional organisation. Factions also offer technical expertise in policy and strategy development, distinctive cadres of grassroots activists organised on sub-national or branch levels, a range of political (material or psychological) resources, and developed communications networks through which to publicise the activities and objectives of the faction. Because factions display self-conscious organisation, their leaderships tend to exert ‘a measure of discipline and cohesion’ over members to maintain loyalty and identification with the faction programme. Disloyalty and abandonment of the faction would be ‘to risk appearing publicly as a renegade’.⁵

Rose defined the political tendency as ‘stable set of attitudes’ which are ‘held together by a more or less coherent ideology’. In contrast to the political faction, tendencies are not

⁴ Rose (1964)

⁵ *ibid.*, p.37

composed of self-consciously organised groups of individuals, expected to maintain membership for long periods of time. This suggests that tendency adherents might hold membership of more than one political tendency at any given moment, resolving 'cross pressures in different ways and in different contexts'. Tendency alignments are, therefore, temporary and are prone to organisational and membership flux. As new political issues arise, political tendencies often liquefy or re-group into new alignments by resolving pre-existing enmities and dispersing former allies.

Finally, Rose identified the existence of ad-hoc issue groups which represented combinations of individuals 'in agreement upon one particular issue or at one moment in time'. Relative to factions and tendencies, these groups do not necessarily occupy the base of a subjective hierarchy of organisation, running from least to most organised. Ad-hoc groups can exist for long periods and may transcend the ideological parameters of both factions *and* tendency groups. For brief periods, ad-hoc issue groups may be highly organised, evidenced by the enduring presence of pro- and anti-European groupings in the Conservative and Labour parties during the mid-1970s. As looser forms of sub-group organisation, the participation of activists may be understood through individuals' choice to avoid identification with either factions or tendencies. At times of intensified intra-party conflict, these groups often generate crucial reservoirs of support by which to mobilise others and 'shift the balance' of power within the party.

There are a number of important differences between the three ideal-types of sub-group suggested by Rose. Tendencies can be distinguished from factions and ad-hoc groups in terms of the extent and cohesion of their own internal organisation, whereas ad-hoc groups differ from factions and tendencies by scope and duration. Moreover, ad-hoc groups remain distinct from factions and tendencies since they influence political parties only on certain questions, whereas factions usually seek to influence the overall power relationship within parties themselves.⁶ While the typology presented by Rose is especially useful to students of modern political parties, the faction-tendency-ad-hoc group distinction suffers from methodological ambiguity – a trait evident in many typologies. We are left unclear as to exactly what level of organisational solidity a faction or tendency should display before it can be labelled as such.

⁶ Hine (1982)

Rose's study contended that the British Conservative Party historically lacked the determinants for structured factional organisation given that it incorporated a variety of different left-wing and right-wing alliances, pronouncing a range of reactive, status quo and reformist ideological approaches. Rose observed that the Conservatives were 'pre-eminently a party of tendencies' where political alignments changed with remarkable regularity. Finer's study of Tory backbench Early Day Motions reinforced this claim. Finer revealed that Conservative dissent arose out of 'struggles between ad-hoc groups of members who may be left or right on specific questions, but as new controversies break out the coherence of former groups dissolves as new alignments appear'.⁷ Rose suggested that Labour 'has been since its foundation a party of factions', where inter-generational left-wing factions have engaged in organised dissent against leadership and other moderates.

"Rose finds...the implicitly majoritarian 'moderate' wing is under constant attack from the 'left' wing, which wants a more drastic socialistic transformation of society than the 'moderate' leadership is willing to effect when Labour is in government"⁸

Rose observed that the history of the Labour Left showed it to be 'notoriously schismatic'. Hence, the nature of intra-party conflict placed a 'high premium [on] non-aligned partisans'. Rose further suggested that the influence of non-aligned groups of parliamentarians and activists played a decisive role, for example, in Gaitskell's battles with his party during the late-1950s and early-1960s over the repeal of Clause 4 and against unilateralism. But, as David Hine asserted, these generalisations as to the pre-eminence of certain types of factional organisation within British parties 'while intuitively plausible and widely followed, is essentially impressionistic'.⁹

Rose's approach to factional organisation differed substantively from Chambers. Rose afforded particular emphasis to the organisational development of factions. Chambers posited that pre-party factional groups were typically oriented around single issues. Rose implied that factions offered a broad range of policies designed to incorporate various factional interests. Chambers also viewed factions as unconsciously organised and short-lived groups, but Rose perceived them as both durable and consciously organised. In practice, therefore, Chambers' pre-party factions appeared to display more of the

⁷ Finer (1961), p.106

⁸ Belloni and Beller (1976), p.537

⁹ Hine (1982), p.39

attributes of Rose's tendency type. Rose's model also differed from that advanced by Ralph Nicholas. Nicholas asserted that the primary organising variable within factions tended to be of leadership v. followership, whereas Rose claimed that factional leadership was of only secondary importance. In Rose's view, the principal objective of factions was to organise in furtherance of identifiable political ideologies to which adherents remained committed. The development of leader-follower roles would occur much more instrumentally (and incidentally) than implied by Nicholas' hypothesis.

The principal intention of Rose's typology sought to classify the observable differences between various types of sub-group operating in, or around, the parliamentary arena. Historically, the Labour Left brought together a number of different groups from a number of different political contexts. Factional participants included members of the party elite, left-wing parliamentarians, trade unionists and, more importantly, a significant number of grassroots activists and other supporters operating *outside* the legislative environment. The context of Labour Left factional organisation revolved around mutual self-interest. Parliamentarians and factional leaders were best placed to influence wider party policy and to publicise objectives and ideological programmes. Grassroots activists, on the other hand, afforded political legitimacy to the activities of the group and its leaders by representing distinctive currents of ideological opinion. It is important to recognise that the organisation of Left factions encompassed a myriad of structures in both the parliamentary and non-parliamentary arenas so as to influence the broad direction of Labour Party policy and electoral strategy.

Rose's underlying assumption that sub-group organisation within political parties should be represented as a linear scale, running from highly to loosely organised, is of particular importance in examining different 'types' of Labour Left faction. This chapter suggests that we can observe all three types of sub-group identified by Rose's model as operating inside the Labour Left after 1979. The Militant Tendency existed as a highly structured organisation, characterised by a stable leadership and heavily ideological platform. These features revealed it as one of the most salient examples of Rose's ideal-type of 'faction'. The soft-left Tribune Group served as a particularly good example of Rose's tendency type. Tribune was noted for its relative lack of organisational solidity, leadership and ideological cohesion. Tribune was parliamentary-based sub-group, existing to represent the diverse range of left-wing ideological opinion within the parliamentary party and,

therefore, it worked almost exclusively within parliamentary structures in order to influence the development of party policy. Finally, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy closely resembled the loose and temporary form of Rose's ad-hoc issue group. Throughout the 1970s and early-1980s, the CLPD concentrated on a narrow political agenda, tightly focused on extending intra-party democracy and protecting the structural rights of grassroots members in determining Labour's political and electoral objectives.

In post-war British politics, intra-party factionalism has been a phenomenon evident in both major parties. But, the existence of left-wing factions in the Labour Party has excited particular attention, for it was the various groups of the Labour Left which acquired the most significant organisational leverage over the prevailing balance of power and ideology inside their party. As Rose concluded,

"The Labour left...shares the desire to transform Britain into a completely socialist society, and the need to act together...in attacking the leaders of the Labour moderates. The persistence of left factions from generation to generation shows the deep roots of the left in the Labour Party".¹⁰

Under Attlee and Gaitskell, intra-party factionalism was dominated by the Bevanites and Keep Left groups. The Tribune Group was created in 1964 to provide a broad left-wing umbrella movement organised in an informal and consensual setting within Parliament – 'to preach and practise hot ideas with cool tongues and heads'.¹¹ The slow ascendancy of the Labour Left during the 1970s was precipitated on an emergent climate of grassroots hostility at the perceived 'illegitimacy' of Labour governments in office. As Arthur Cyr observed, the late-1960s and early-1970s saw 'an important structural shift in the composition of the left and moderate sections of the party' which created a new balance of forces.¹²

"However, the extremely significant shift in the relationship of forces which has occurred in the Labour Party in recent years has not primarily involved non-aligned partisans, but rather the realignment of significant memberships of trade unions from moderate to left. In effect, on important economic and other policy issues, two of the most highly organised sections of the party – the left and the unions – have partially overlapped".¹³

¹⁰ Rose (1964), pp.41-2

¹¹ Kinnock in Tribune 29.11.74

¹² Cyr (1976), p.295

¹³ *ibid.*, p.297

These new forces were both heterogeneous and vulnerable. Whereas the early successes of the Labour Left were predicated on the inefficiencies of party leadership in managing their organisation, the seeds of the Left's eventual decline were rooted in the misperception that it maintained a unity of strategic and ideological purpose. Labour Left factionalism during the 1970s gradually departed from the exclusivity of parliamentary-based dissent typified by Tribune, towards ad-hoc issue groups like the CLPD and Labour Co-ordinating Committee which displayed the organisational traits of neither faction nor tendency. The growing paralysis of leadership following Labour's 1979 defeat encouraged the rise of more organised forms of factionalism typified by Militant and Socialist Organiser. But, after the 1983 defeat, the resurgence of centralised leadership exposed *all* three types of group to decline. The limited political agenda of ad-hoc groups like the CLPD ensured that they exerted only temporary influence over the wider party. The broad-based tendency structure of Tribune meant that, as party leaders regained control over the party at-large, its distinctiveness was lost through the formation of new coalitions and allegiances. If these groups could not survive the fragmentation of the Labour Left it was unlikely that the more structured and visible forms of Militant factionalism could survive either.

Tendency – the Tribune Group

The Tribune Group filled the vacuum left by the demise of Keep Left and the Bevanites during the mid-1950s. Tribune was formed after Labour's victory in the 1964 general election and, ever since, the group operated as the largest and most successful of the various Labour Left groups at Westminster.¹⁴ Indeed, until the 1981 deputy leadership contest and the creation of the Campaign Group in December 1982, Tribune operated as *the* Labour Left in Parliament, providing an important forum where left-leaning Labour MPs could meet and discuss issues and ideological priorities.

Labour's Westminster parliamentarians have dominated the active membership of the Tribune Group, although members of the European parliamentary party have been allowed to join since 1981. While the key objective of the Group sought to provide effective leads to political opinion inside the parliamentary party, most of Tribune's strategic concerns involved procedural and legislative matters before the House of

¹⁴ see Twitchell (1998) for a detailed history of the Tribune Group between 1964 and 1970

Commons. Only at infrequent intervals would the Tribune Group publish detailed policy statements. The absence of a clear platform of ideological principles meant that Tribune members escaped binding mandates forcing them to support the consensus arrived at Tribune's weekly meetings. The Tribune Group operated as a 'broad church' for the parliamentary Labour Left, and it displayed many of the typological traits of tendency organisation proposed by Rose. As Seyd observed, Tribune existed as

"...a rather loose and amorphous body acting as a meeting-ground for like-minded members of the PLP at which discussions on parliamentary business and tactics took place but at which no attempt was made to organise a regiment of MPs to act in a concerted manner in the House..."¹⁵

The Tribune Group enjoyed limited success in establishing an organisational structure *outside* Westminster. During the 1970s, there were a number of attempts to establish local Tribune groups, largely to dispel accusations that the Group ignored rank-and-file opinion by concentrating exclusively on the parliamentary 'machine'. In 1975, a local Tribune 'branch' was established in Bristol. More than twenty other local Tribune groups were formed before 1979. Although the Westminster Tribune Group operated national registers of local groups, it did not seek to co-ordinate their activities or exercise formal organisational control over them. As party leaders became increasingly concerned at the growth of branch-based groups, the number of local Tribune groups began to decline. After 1980, Tribune held occasional one-day national conferences to supplement annual Tribune 'rallies' and speaker meetings at Labour's annual conferences. The relative lack of progress made by Tribune in establishing a formal local structure allowed other groups, notably the Militant Tendency, to fill the emerging void in grassroots representation at the extra-parliamentary level. Tribune continued to operate as an exclusive club for the parliamentary left.

The Tribune Group has always attracted a range of senior Labour parliamentarians. Important figures at the time of the Group's formation in 1966 included Ian Mikardo, Eric Heffer, Stan Orme and Stan Newens. During the 1970s, Michael Foot, Neil Kinnock and Joan Maynard became active members of Tribune, and in the 1980s leading Tribunites included Michael Meacher, Bryan Gould and Derek Fatchett. The Tribune Group's membership also boasted a number of parliamentarians who later went on to

¹⁵ Seyd (1987), p.78

serve at the heart of New Labour, including Gordon Brown, Robin Cook, Jack Straw, John Prescott, Harriet Harman and, crucially, even Tony Blair himself.

The trends in Tribune Group membership revealed the extent to which it was maintained as a highly influential sub-group operating in the parliamentary arena. During its formative years, the Group's active membership remained relatively contained. After the October 1974 election, 41 Labour MPs joined Tribune and its membership accounted for approximately 11% percent of the parliamentary party. By 1978, Tribune membership had risen to 86 (or 27% of the PLP). The Tribune Group briefly secured the election of Ian Mikardo as chair of the parliamentary party in March 1974, and it played a crucial role in the PLP's rejection of Wilson's renegotiated terms of accession to the EEC in 1975.¹⁶

As Table 1 illustrates, Tribune membership remained static following Labour's 1979 election defeat, although the Group continued to represent more than one-quarter of the entire parliamentary party. The most significant upturn in Tribune membership occurred after the 1987 election – the era of Kinnock's Policy Review. Membership increased year-on-year after 1985, and peaked in 1988 with more than 100 Labour MPs (approximately one-half of the parliamentary party). After 1989, membership declined rapidly and following the 1992 election, the number of Tribune members fell back to pre-1979 levels, representing only one-fifth of all Labour MPs.

The growth in Tribune's membership during the mid-1980s reinforced claims that the Kinnock leadership used Tribune as an important source of political legitimacy for its agenda of party modernisation and ideological transformation. The influx of leadership sympathisers suggested that opposition to reform inside the parliamentary party could be minimised. The active membership of Tribune now included most of the key soft-leftists as well as a number of pro-Kinnock moderates. As Richard Heffernan suggested, after the 1987 election the Tribune Group 'was colonised by the leadership'.¹⁷

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.78. Mikardo was defeated by Cledwyn Hughes in a second ballot in November 1974

¹⁷ Heffernan and Marqusee (1992), p.126

Year	Tribune Group MPs	Tribune Group Others ¹⁸	Tribune Group total	PLP total	Tribune Group MPs as % of PLP
1979	-	-	-	-	-
1980	67	0	67	267	25.0
1981	72	1	73	253	28.4
1982	72	2	74	238	30.2
1983	53	4	57	207	25.6
1984	59	4	63	207	28.5
1985	60	12	72	207	29.0
1986	60	16	76	208	28.9
1987	101	19	120	227	44.5
1988	103	19	122	227	45.3
1989	93	18	111	227	40.9
1990	84	25	109	225	37.3
1991	c. 80	-	c. 80	228	35.0
1992	c. 56	-	c. 56	269	20.8

Table 1: Tribune Group membership and the Parliamentary Labour Party 1979-92

Source: data compiled from Tribune 1979-92 and National Executive Committee reports 1979-92

The annexing of Tribune as part of a new pro-leadership alliance is also evidenced by the success of leading Tribunites in the annual Shadow Cabinet elections, albeit that these trends may reflect the overall increase in the number of Tribune members inside the parliamentary party. Tribune commanded a membership of almost one-half of all Labour MPs, and the group evidently enjoyed much greater success in internal PLP elections. In June 1987, the Tribune Group rejected proposals for the establishment of a joint slate with the Campaign Group for the Shadow Cabinet ballot and, instead, nominated only ten Tribune candidates for the fifteen places available. Crucially, this allowed the right-wing (Labour Solidarity Group) to secure the remaining positions, where its key figures were appointed to senior posts. John Smith became Shadow Chancellor, Gerald Kaufman was appointed to the foreign affairs brief, and Roy Hattersley became Shadow Home Secretary.

Nevertheless, several important economic and industrial positions were given to leading members of the Tribune Group. Gould was appointed as trade and industry spokesperson, and Meacher was rewarded with the key employment portfolio. As Table 2 illustrates, the success of Tribunites in Shadow Cabinet elections powerfully reflected Tribune's closer overall proximity to party leadership. In 1986, less than one-third of the membership of the Shadow Cabinet was drawn from Tribune. By 1989, the Group assumed unparalleled control in occupying more than two-thirds of all front-bench positions.

¹⁸ Tribune Group Others: includes Labour peers (n=2 1983 to 1989) and Labour MEPs

Year	Ex-officio ¹⁹	Elected	total
1980	1 (4)	3 (12)	4 (16)
1981	1 (4)	5 (15)	6 (19)
1982	1 (4)	5 (15)	6 (19)
1983	1 (4)	6 (15)	7 (19)
1984	1 (4)	5 (15)	6 (19)
1985	2 (4)	5 (15)	7 (19)
1986	2 (4)	4 (15)	6 (19)
1987	3 (4)	9 (15)	12 (19)
1988	3 (4)	9 (15)	12 (19)
1989	3 (4)	12 (18)	15 (22)
1990	3 (4)	11 (18)	14 (22)
1991	3 (4)	11 (18)	14 (22)

Table 2: Tribune Group membership and the Shadow Cabinet 1979-91

Source: data compiled from Tribune 1979-92 and National Executive Committee reports 1979-92

The most serious organisational threat to face Tribune immediately followed Tony Benn's 1981 challenge for the deputy-leadership. Although Benn was not a long-standing member of Tribune, he looked to the Group to provide broad left-wing support for his candidacy from among Labour's parliamentarians. As Table 3 below highlights, the voting patterns of the Tribune membership revealed the extent of division over Benn's challenge. Whereas Benn secured the votes of a majority of Tribune members in both ballots, thirty Tribunites voted for Silkin in the first round, and one-quarter of the Tribune membership failed to cast a vote in the second ballot. Such fragmentation in the Tribune vote undoubtedly contributed to Benn's eventual narrow defeat to Healey.²⁰ As Benn remarked, the 1981 contest was decided by 'the abstention of a group of Tribune Group MPs who, in the end, turned out to be the people who carried the day'.²¹ In December 1982, the parliamentary left split into two. Benn joined with other hard-left parliamentary colleagues like Dennis Skinner, Denis Canavan and Terry Fields, and together they formed the Campaign Group in direct political competition to Tribune.

	1 st ballot votes	1 st ballot %	2 nd ballot votes	2 nd ballot %
Deputy Leader:				
Benn, Tony	40	55.6	49	68.9
Healey, Denis	1	1.4	5	6.9
Silkin, John	30	41.7	-	-
Did not vote ²²	1	1.4	18	25.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 3: Tribune Group voting in the 1981 deputy leadership election

Source: data compiled from Tribune (1981) and LPACR 1981

¹⁹ ex-officio positions: Leader, Deputy Leader, Chief Whip and Chair of the PLP

²⁰ First ballot: all MPs (30% of electoral college) – Benn 6.7%, Healey 15.3%, Silkin 7.9%; total electoral college – Benn 36.6%, Healey 45.3%, Silkin 18.0%. Second ballot: all MPs (30%) – Benn 10.2%, Healey 19.7%; total electoral college – Benn 49.5%, Healey 50.4%. See LPACR (1981), p.26

²¹ Benn (1992), p.154

²² Did not vote: Michael Foot did not vote in first ballot. Tribune MPs who voted for Silkin in first ballot but did not vote in second ballot included Neil Kinnock, Robert Kilroy-Silk, Kevin McNamara and Martin O'Neill

Since the Benn-Healey contest, the voting trends of Tribune Group members in leadership elections continued to reveal the extent of division between the various candidates of the left and right-wings of party. As Table 4 illustrates, more than two-thirds of Tribunites endorsed Neil Kinnock over Eric Heffer in the 1983 leadership ballot. But in the deputy-leadership election, Tribunate opinion appeared much more sharply divided. Although several Tribunites displayed personal loyalty to Gwyneth Dunwoody and Denzil Davies as the minority candidates, the remaining Tribune votes were evenly fractured between the two favoured nominees. Therefore, it is particularly interesting to note that as many Tribune MPs voted for their own candidate (Michael Meacher) as voted for Roy Hattersley who was one of the leading patrons of the rival Labour Solidarity group to the right of Tribune.

	Votes	%
Leader:		
Hattersley, Roy	3	7.3
Heffer, Eric	6	14.6
Kinnock, Neil	29	70.7
Shore, Peter	3	7.3
<i>Total²³</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Deputy Leader:		
Davies, Denzil	5	12.2
Dunwoody, Gwyneth	1	2.4
Hattersley, Roy	16	39.0
Meacher, Michael	17	41.5
Did not vote	2	4.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 4: Tribune Group voting in the 1983 leadership elections
Source: data compiled from Tribune (1983) and LPACR (1983)

The Tribune Group vote was also split in the party leadership elections held in October 1988. Tony Benn’s challenge against Kinnock secured him less than ten percent of Tribune votes, typically of those left-wing Tribune members like Harry Barnes, Maria Fyfe, Bill Michie and Audrey Wise. As in 1983, it was the deputy-leadership contest that proved the most divisive. Table 5 highlights that substantially more Tribune MPs supported Hattersley over John Prescott. Prescott had been a long-standing member of Tribune throughout the 1980s.

²³ 41 Tribune Group MPs voted in the 1983 leadership ballots; the remainder of those reported as Tribune members for that year in Table 1 either lost their seats in the 1983 general election or were otherwise ineligible to vote.

	votes	%
Leader:		
Kinnock, Neil	92	89.3
Benn, Tony	9	8.7
Did not vote ²⁴	2	1.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>103</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Deputy Leader:		
Hattersley, Roy	55	53.4
Prescott, John	37	35.9
Heffer, Eric	10	9.7
Did not vote	1	1.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>103</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 5: Tribune Group voting in the 1988 leadership elections

Source: data compiled from Tribune (1988) and LPACR (1988)

The ‘tendency’ traits of the Tribune Group are also highlighted by observable trends in parliamentary rebellion against the front-bench leadership. As Seyd observed, it is important to distinguish between relatively inactive Tribune members and ‘those active members regularly attending the Group meetings and displaying their commitment by regular parliamentary rebellion’.²⁵ All eighty-six Tribune MPs voted against the government on at least one occasion between 1974 and 1979. Most Tribunites rebelled in forty or more Commons divisions, and one-third of them dissented on over seventy separate occasions. Tribunate rebellion was particularly significant during the report stage of the 1975 Industry Bill, in the defeat of the Labour government’s public expenditure plans in March 1976, during the standing committee debate on the 1977 Finance Bill, and in the narrow defeat of the government’s pay policy in December 1978. As Philip Norton concluded, during the mid-1970s the Tribune Group provided the source of ‘the most persistent, sizeable and cohesive dissent’ inside the parliamentary party.²⁶

Total dissenting votes in Commons divisions	Tribune MPs	Tribune MPs as % of PLP dissidents
1	3	9
2-9	10	11
10-19	8	21
20-29	12	37
30-39	8	47
40-49	10	50
50-59	2	60
60-69	6	75
70-79	5	100
80-89	7	100
90-99	6	100
100+	9	100
	86	

Table 6: Tribune Group Dissent in Commons Divisions 1974-79

Source: data reproduced from Seyd (1987), p. 80

²⁴ Did not vote: Calum MacDonald (Leader and Deputy Leader); Clare Short (Leader)

²⁵ Seyd (1987), p.79

²⁶ Norton (1980), p.434

When Labour was in opposition, the Tribunate inclination towards dissent appeared to wane quite sharply. The decline of Tribune dissent can, in part, be explained by the earlier fragmentation of the parliamentary left, since a number of the more persistent rebels of the 1974-79 period resigned in favour of the hard-left Campaign Group. Furthermore, as discussed above, the nature of Tribune membership highlighted the influx of new members after 1985, and the close overall proximity of Tribune to party leaders and the Shadow Cabinet. The emergence of new coalitions at the elite level involved a consequent reduction of parliamentary dissent by Tribunate MPs.

During the 1989-90 parliamentary session, a total of 1,320 dissenting votes were recorded by Labour MPs in eighty-one Commons divisions (23.5% of all divisions), of which 753 concerned detailed legislation for the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill. As Table 7 below illustrates, around three-quarters of Labour MPs cast at least one dissenting vote in the session, of which more than one-third (35%) were members of Tribune. On average, Labour MPs rebelled on 3.5 occasions during 1989-90, whereas Tribune Group MPs dissented only 2.7 times in the session. Moreover, thirty-six MPs (16% of the PLP) persistently rebelled on five or more occasions, of which less than one-third (30.5%) were drawn from the membership of the Tribune Group.

A number of Tribune members joined other Labour MPs in the 1989-90 session to cast dissenting votes against Conservative legislation, Commons private business and other private members bills. For example, on 8th May 1990 one-half of the twenty-four Labour rebels supporting the legalisation of voluntary euthanasia were members of Tribune.²⁷ On 24th July 1990, four Tribune members joined five other Labour MPs by supporting the Second Reading of the London Underground Bill.²⁸ Tribune Group members also comprised around one-third of dissenting votes cast by supporting a government motion to refer the War Crimes Bill to a Commons committee on 19th March 1990.²⁹ Yet, in an adjournment division on 7th September 1990 in the debate on the Gulf crisis following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, fewer than ten percent of the thirty-four Labour MPs who endorsed the motion were drawn from the ranks of Tribune.³⁰

²⁷ Hansard – HC Deb. 172, col.47

²⁸ HC Deb. 177, col.392

²⁹ HC Deb. 169, col.975

³⁰ HC Deb. 177, col.903

Number of dissenting votes	Tribune MPs	All Labour MPs
1	24	52
2-3	22	64
4-5	4	19
6-7	5	16
8-9	3	8
10-11	0	0
12-14	1	4
15 or more	0	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>164</i>
<i>Total dissenting votes</i>	<i>164</i>	<i>567</i>
Average incidence of dissent	2.7	3.5
(Total Tribune/PLP membership – 1989)	(93)	(227)

Table 7: Tribune Group dissenting votes during the 1989-90 parliamentary session³¹
Source: data compiled from Campaign Information Ltd (1991)

The incidence of parliamentary dissent among both Tribune Group members and Labour MPs as a whole declined substantially during the following parliamentary session in 1990-91, where thirty-one divisions (13.3% of all divisions) recorded a split in the Labour vote. Table 8 below reveals that slightly more than one-half of all Labour MPs (54%) dissented on at least one occasion in the session, of which less than one-in-four were members of the Tribune Group (24%). Labour MPs dissented on 2.5 occasions, compared with Tribune members who rebelled on 2.3 occasions. Only one-in-twenty Labour MPs (5.3%) persistently rebelled against the majority position on five or more occasions, of which one-quarter were members of the Tribune Group. Hence, during the 1990-1 session, persistent Tribune Group rebels accounted for less than 2% of the entire parliamentary party.

Specific instances of dissent in 1990-91 included the War Crimes Bill, a piece of government legislation that divided both major political parties. In a division held on 18th March 1991 to give the Bill a Second Reading, ten Labour MPs dissented including just two members of the Tribune Group.³² Andrew Bennett was the only Tribune member to rebel during the Third Reading held the following week.³³ In February 1991, ten Labour MPs voted against a motion sponsored by the Labour front-bench to introduce a clause into the Road Traffic Bill providing for random breath testing, of which only three were members of Tribune.³⁴ The crisis in the Persian Gulf continued to encourage parliamentary dissent from the Labour backbenches. During three Commons divisions

³¹ Because of the high number of instances of Labour dissent regarding the provisions of the 1989 Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, these have been excluded from the analysis. This reflects the methodology used by Campaign Information (1991)

³² HC Deb. 188, col.112

³³ HC Deb. 188, col.738

³⁴ HC Deb. 186, col.866

held in December 1990-January 1991, a significant number of Labour MPs opposed the party leadership’s position towards the military crisis, albeit that Tribune Group members accounted for less than one-fifth of dissidents on all occasions.³⁵

Number of dissenting votes	Tribune MPs	All Labour MPs
1	12	39
2-3	12	58
4-5	4	19
6-7	2	6
8-9	0	0
10-11	0	1
12-14	0	0
15 or more	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>123</i>
<i>Total dissenting votes</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>312</i>
Average incidence of dissent	2.3	2.5
(Total Tribune/PLP membership – 1990)	(84)	(225)

Table 8: Tribune Group dissenting votes during the 1990-91 parliamentary session
Source: data compiled from Campaign Information Ltd (1992)

In comparison with the 1970s, the extent of parliamentary rebellion by members of Tribune had declined substantially. During the 1974-79 parliament, every Tribune member dissented on at least one occasion. In the 1991 parliamentary session, almost two-thirds of Tribune MPs consistently upheld the majority position of the parliamentary party. There may be a number of different explanations for these trends. Tribune members may have chosen to dissent on fewer occasions when Labour was in opposition. Similarly, the type of legislation before the House of Commons in 1989-91 might have produced generally less deviant responses from Labour MPs. More probably, the parliamentary party now contained a particularly pervasive environment in which Labour MPs sought to uphold the appearance of parliamentary unity at every opportunity. Nonetheless, by appreciating the prevalence of Tribune members to engage in significant acts of parliamentary rebellion, no longer was it that ‘from the Tribune ranks that the most persistent rebels emerged’.³⁶

Following the 1992 general election, the active parliamentary membership of Tribune declined to pre-1979 levels. During the previous eighteen months, Tribune membership (as a proportion of the parliamentary party) declined by more than 50%. The Tribune Group accounted for only around one-fifth of the entire parliamentary party. In July

³⁵ HC Deb. 182, col.908 – Adjournment motion on 11.12.90 to discuss the Gulf crisis (40 rebels including 6 Tribune members); HC Deb. 183, col.821 – Adjournment motion on 15.01.91 to discuss the Gulf crisis (53 rebels including 11 Tribune members); and HC Deb. 184, col.110 – Government motion on 21.01.91 commending British troops (34 rebels including 4 Tribune members)

³⁶ Seyd (1987), p.80

1992, Tribune attempted to revive its network of local groups to rebuild its rank-and-file popularity. The function of this network 'would not be to organise a new soft-left faction in the Labour Party' but to further 'debate and to help revive Labour at the grassroots'. It was estimated that around four hundred supporters were successfully recruited into local Tribune groups by the autumn of 1994.³⁷

Blair's election as party leader encouraged several leading Tribune members to launch *What's Left* as a breakaway soft-left 'forum' to the Tribune Group. The split in Tribune occurred largely in reaction to the ousting of Peter Hain and Roger Berry from the Tribune executive (in 1993) following publication of their critique of Labour's treasury programme. As David Osler observed, *What's Left* served as a counter 'to the perceived drift' of Tribune 'towards the moderniser camp', particularly since most of the active Tribune membership 'strongly supported Tony Blair'.³⁸

The Tribune Group displayed many of the typological traits of tendency organisation suggested by Rose. Since the 1960s, Tribune operated as a 'broad church' of left-wing opinion inside the parliamentary party without the structured organisational characteristics of the political faction, nor the temporary single-issue qualities of the ad-hoc group. During the 1970s, the Tribune movement provided crucial political legitimacy for a number of radical policy instruments, including the AES, unilateral nuclear disarmament and democratic-socialist Euro-scepticism. During the mid-1980s the Tribune Group lost its ideological distinctiveness. The sharp increase in membership between 1985 and 1990 was not reflective of a renewed popularity among Labour parliamentarians for Tribune's brand of left politics. Rather, it symbolised the use of the Tribune Group by Labour modernisers as a vehicle through which to establish important alliances to reinforce party-level modernisation. Far from being a beacon of anti-leadership defiance, as in the 1970s, an affiliation with the Tribune Group under Kinnock's leadership during the late-1980s became an important 'career-move' for aspirant frontbenchers. As Paul Anderson concluded, the Tribune Group was 'undoubtedly more closely tied to the party leadership today than ever before'. What little

³⁷ Clare Short quoted in Tribune 03.07.92

³⁸ Tribune 25.11.94

resurgent dissent remained among the ranks of Tribune had become essentially ‘muted and fragmentary’.³⁹

Ad-hoc Issue Group – the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) is one of the most recent salient examples of Richard Rose’s ideal-type of ad-hoc issue group. Contrasted with other factional groups at the sub-party level, the CLPD’s strategic objectives concentrated on a narrow agenda of intra-party democracy, public ownership, and the protection of membership and trade union rights in determining party policy. But the CLPD lacked the durability and permanency shown by other factions and tendencies of the Labour Left. The acme of the CLPD’s influence inside the Labour Party was confined to the late-1970s and early-1980s, notably the period around the Wembley special conference in January 1981. As Panitch and Leys concluded, the CLPD ‘for a while became the core organisation of perhaps the most powerful movement for radical intra-party reform ever to arise within western social democracy’.⁴⁰ Thereafter, it ceased to advance any substantively new ideas concerning either party policy or intra-party democracy and, by 1986, its active membership had declined substantially. Although the CLPD survived as an affiliated organisation inside New Labour, it remained a small and rather isolated group led by an executive team which, since the CLPD’s foundation, has been dominated by the partnership of Vladimir and Vera Derer.

The origins of the CLPD can be traced back to 1973, to Harold Wilson’s controversial decision to reject large parts of *Labour’s Programme 1973*, and to the NEC’s landmark decision in June 1973 to include commitments towards the nationalisation of the leading twenty-five industrial companies. For many grassroots activists, the leadership’s acquiescence towards policies endorsed by successive party conference brought into sharp relief the need to wrestle decision-making authority away from the party elite. The strategy of the CLPD sought to challenge the pre-eminence of Michel’s ‘iron law of oligarchy’ inside the party, particularly to redress the ‘disorganisation and deference among the active membership’ by granting party leaders unfettered control ‘over the

³⁹ Tribune 10.01.92

⁴⁰ Panitch and Leys (1997), p.135

party administration and conference agenda'.⁴¹ This strategic approach was evident in the CLPD's founding statement of aims and values:

'We call on the National Executive Committee: (a) to carry out fully its responsibility as custodian of conference decisions; (b) to be responsive to rank and file opinion between conferences and extend the processes of consultation with the constituenc[ies]; (c) to report back in writing to constituency Labour parties, trade unions and other affiliated organisations at not less than quarterly intervals; and (d) to make National Executive Committee meetings open to representatives from the constituenc[ies]. Finally we urge the NEC to...make sure that Labour's election manifesto accurately reflects party policy as expressed by annual conference decisions'.⁴²

The CLPD developed a formal organisational structure after 1974, including a clearly defined membership, an executive committee and annual general meetings. The group also held occasional rallies and speaker-meetings, and it was particularly visible at party conferences. The CLPD created two distinct types of membership – affiliates and individual members – but, so as not to transgress the party's constitution which forbade branch-based membership organisations, the CLPD labelled both types of member as 'supporters'. Unlike Tribune, the CLPD did not rely upon the endorsement and active participation of Labour MPs. Those parliamentarians who were actively involved with the CLPD tended to assume titular rather than executive positions.⁴³

The formative political agenda of the CLPD concentrated on four key instruments of organisation underlying the *single-issue* focus on the grassroots democratisation of party structures. First, the introduction of mandatory reselection for all sitting Labour MPs in order to improve the accountability of parliamentarians to local parties and local members. Second, the widening of the franchise for the election of party leaders through the creation of an electoral college which included provision for the main political 'units' of the party. Third, to guarantee the supremacy of conference decision-making by asserting the representative authority of the NEC in determining the form of Labour's general election manifestos. Finally, to improve the transparency of the parliamentary party through the publication of PLP debates and voting records.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.138

⁴² CLPD Statement of Aims, June 1973

⁴³ For example, Frank Allaun was CLPD president from 1973 to 1975, succeeded by Frances Morrell until 1983. Audrey Wise and Jo Richardson both served as CLPD vice-presidents during the 1970s and 1980s.

Mandatory reselection was a key priority for the CLPD as early as the group's first public meeting held on the 'fringe' at the 1973 conference. Activists were particularly concerned with selection procedures in light of the explosion of grassroots resentment following the de-selection of Dick Taverne in Lincoln in 1972. Grassroots members acknowledged that party conference and the NEC possessed inadequate organisational leverage over parliamentary leaders. Labour also maintained cumbersome procedures for the sanctioning of incumbent MPs and the nomination of alternative candidates. The CLPD executive concluded that 'under the present arrangements there is no way the conference can effectively influence the parliamentary party'. The threat of de-selection would, instead, improve the 'individual accountability of each MP to a regularly held selection conference' and could, therefore, bring about a 'fundamental change which no conference can accomplish'.⁴⁴

Mandatory reselection was also an important organisational issue for the party at-large. Four sitting Labour MPs had been deselected – Taverne in Lincoln in 1972, followed by Eddie Milne (Blythe) in 1973, Eddie Griffiths (Sheffield Brightside) in 1974 and Reg Prentice (Newham North-East) in 1975. At the 1974 conference, an amendment supported by the CLPD to enable local parties to hold selection meetings at least once during the lifetime of each parliament was defeated by more than 1.5 million votes. In 1975 and 1976, the Conference Arrangements Committee used the arcane 'three-year rule' to prevent further discussion of the issue, irrespective that some local parties had already submitted resolutions in favour of mandatory reselection. At the 1977 conference, the CLPD secured the support of sixty-seven local parties who signed identical model resolutions on reselection.⁴⁵ Thirty other similar resolutions were proposed but, again, the CAC prevented debate, claiming that all constitutional amendments needed to be on the table before the NEC for at least twelve months. The NEC convened a working party to examine the issue, and its report was presented to the 1978 party conference. The working party proposed systems of 'competitive reselection', whereby a ballot would be triggered only after initial votes had gone against an incumbent Labour MP. Although the CLPD sought more routinised methods for parliamentary reselection, it begrudgingly accepted the proposals as a temporary measure

⁴⁴ CLPD Newsletter 2, 06.75; newsletters from 1973 to 1986 are available for consultation at the British Library ref. ZC.9.b.739

⁴⁵ the model resolution adopted by "the 67" proposed a system of reselection in all local parties within forty-two months of the date of the last general election; see CLPD Newsletter 14, 10.78

that could be adapted later. The CLPD executive succinctly summarised the issue for its grassroots activists:

“mandatory reselection would meet two vital needs. The first is the need to make Labour MPs more accountable; the second is to make the procedure whereby Labour MPs may be replaced less damaging to the party”⁴⁶

Despite the growing popularity of mandatory reselection among party members and trade unionists, the 1978 conference narrowly defeated the NEC’s proposals following the controversial ‘miscasting’ of votes by the engineers’ leader Hugh Scanlon. The remarkable shift of opinion towards reselection, especially among trade unionists, meant that party leaders could not prevent further discussion of the issue. Following Labour’s election defeat in 1979, mandatory reselection was endorsed by more than one million votes. The CLPD finally secured a system of reselection ‘accepted as normal in most European social democratic parties’. Moreover, it was an organisational mechanism that was ‘extremely difficult to refute by any standards of democracy’.⁴⁷

The CLPD turned its attention to two other key issues surrounding intra-party democracy after 1979. Following the successes of re-selection in 1979, the CLPD executive immediately circulated a newsletter that declared proudly ‘*The Fight Must Go On*’. The CLPD would inaugurate a campaign to limit the authority of parliamentarians, both in selecting party leaders and in agreeing Labour’s election manifestos. In 1980, the CLPD joined with other left-wing groups, notably the Campaign for a Labour Victory, the Institute for Workers’ Control and the National Organisation of Labour Students, and together they formed the Rank-and-File Mobilising Committee.⁴⁸ The RFMC acted as an extra-parliamentary ‘umbrella’ organisation that would secure the ideological and organisational demands of the Labour Left, particularly the areas of reform identified by the CLPD. Seyd noted that the RFMC briefly became an important unifier for the Left ‘from which to mount an extensive campaign for [party] constitutional reform’. Within months, the RFMC was mobilised for Tony Benn’s challenge against Healey for the party’s deputy-leadership.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ CLPD Newsletter 14, 10.78

⁴⁷ Hine (1986), p.279

⁴⁸ Other left-wing groups subsequently joined the RFMC, including the Militant Tendency, the Labour Party Young Socialists, and the Socialist Educational Association.

⁴⁹ Seyd (1987), p.116

The debate concerning the franchise for the election of party leaders began after Callaghan's election as leader in 1976. The NEC reported on the issue to the 1977 conference, and suggested that the party could choose between one of three options: to leave the existing arrangements in place, transfer the power to conference delegates, or establish an electoral college. In 1978, conference delegates agreed to continue with the established formula where parliamentarians alone selected Labour's leadership team. The following year, the CLPD secured the support of the NEC to include twenty-five resolutions and amendments in favour of an electoral college. Two composite motions were eventually debated. Both were narrowly defeated.⁵⁰

The CLPD continued to pressurise the party elite on the electoral college issue. At the party conference in October 1980, the NEC recommended to delegates that they should approve a constitutional amendment bearing remarkable resemblance to that defeated only the year before. Although the conference approved broadly worded motions favouring the widening of the franchise, it proceeded to defeat several key amendments regarding the formula for vote allocation in the electoral college.⁵¹ The issue was subsequently deferred to a special conference on constitutional reform to be held at the Wembley conference centre in January 1981.

The second issue exciting the CLPD after Labour's 1979 defeat involved the locus of constitutional responsibility for approving the party's election manifestos. The existing arrangements stipulated that manifestos should include all policies approved by conference with more than a two-thirds majority, and that the NEC and front-bench would be jointly responsible for deciding which of these policies would ultimately be included in Labour's election programme.⁵² But, the need to hurriedly devise a Labour manifesto following Callaghan's defeat in the vote of government no-confidence in March 1979, meant that many of the agreed conference policies were either ignored or remained politically ambiguous.

⁵⁰ LPACR (1979), pp.252,262,454

⁵¹ Electoral college amendments: (1) NEC recommendation for an electoral college including all members of the PLP and endorsed parliamentary candidates, and delegates from local parties and affiliated organisations (*defeated by 3,557,000 to 3,495,000 votes*); (2) Eric Heffer's amendment for an electoral college with three equal constituencies of PLP members in attendance at party conference, delegates from affiliated organisations, and delegates from local parties (*defeated by 3,757,000 to 3,322,000 votes*); and (3) second NEC amendment proposing electoral college of PLP [30%], CLPs [30%] and affiliated organisations [40%] (*defeated by 3,910,000 to 3,235,000 votes*); see LPACR (1980), p.191

⁵² Labour Party Rule Book (1978), clause V section (ii)

“Its whole tenor differed on economic affairs from the NEC’s commitments to an alternative economic strategy of reflation, import controls and public control of industry...Similar ambiguities and omissions occurred in the field of social and educational policy...[and] the party’s commitment to total abolition of the House of Lords had been personally vetoed by the Prime Minister”.⁵³

At the 1979 conference, the CLPD secured the support of twenty-five local parties to submit resolutions ‘regretting’ the omissions and ambiguities evident in Labour’s programme. The motions proposed that formal powers for the approval of election programmes should be ceded to the NEC. As the CLPD observed,

“The record of Labour governments since 1964 demonstrates that the party’s most urgent task is to ensure that Labour Party policies, as decided by conference, are implemented by the PLP...The party needs to regain control over the manifesto. The amendment we suggest would create the direct accountability to conference which is needed if the party is to ensure that an election manifesto is produced based on conference decisions”.⁵⁴

Crucially, the NEC endorsed the CLPD’s proposals and conference delegates narrowly approved motions calling on the NEC to devise an appropriately worded constitutional amendment for later discussion. When the matter was debated again at the 1980 conference, the constitutional amendment was narrowly defeated.⁵⁵ The CLPD’s manifesto proposals could not be debated until *after* the electoral college issue had been resolved at the Wembley special conference in January 1981.

1,100 delegates attended the special rules revision conference held in Wembley on 24th January 1981, representing over 600 local constituency parties, trade unions and socialist societies.⁵⁶ More than 200 constitutional amendments concerning the method of election for party leaders were submitted which, in various forms, proposed the same types of electoral college discussed by the October 1980 conference. First, a college with thirty percent of the vote for parliamentarians, thirty percent for local parties and forty percent for affiliated organisations. Second, a college awarding half of all votes to the PLP with the remainder split equally between constituencies and affiliates. Third, a college of all

⁵³ Seyd (1987), p.122

⁵⁴ CLPD Newsletter 15, 06.79

⁵⁵ The 1980 constitutional amendment was defeated by 3,625,000 to 3,508,000 votes; see LPACR (1980), p.148

⁵⁶ Delegations and voting power: CLPs – 591 delegates from 588 local parties (689,000 votes); trade unions – 523 delegates from 50 trade unions (6,446,000 votes); socialist societies – 17 delegates from 10 organisations (67,000 votes); total 1,131 delegates from 648 organisations (7,202,000 votes); see NEC Report (1981), Report of the Special Rules Revision Conference (1981), p.121

individual members of the party operating on the basis of one-member-one-vote, a proposal which the RFMC and CLPD universally opposed. Fourth, the NEC's proposal to establish an electoral college with one-third of the total votes each for the PLP, constituencies and affiliated organisations.⁵⁷

The electoral college issue divided the Labour Left. The soft-left and the Tribune Group supported the 33:33:33:1 option proposed by the NEC. The hard-left RFMC, the CLPD, and some of the larger trade unions favoured the 30:30:40 option proposed by the shop-workers' union (USDAW). The CLPD quickly identified that the main battle would be between the USDAW motion and the 50:25:25 option proposed by the GMWU. The CLPD further predicted that NEC's proposal was 'almost certain to be defeated'. Since the group opposed the re-affirmation of the authority of the PLP in electing party leaders, the CLPD 'strongly urged' its supporters in the constituency parties and trade unions to support the USDAW amendment.⁵⁸ As Table 9 below reveals, the CLPD and RFMC enjoyed remarkable success. Not only were they correct in appreciating that the final contest would be between USDAW and GMWU, but they also successfully ensured that the preferred 30:30:40 option prevailed when the NEC's motion and other amendments were defeated in the first and second ballots.

Seyd poignantly observed that the distribution of voting revealed how 'perilously close' the CLPD came to losing the entire battle. In the first ballot, the NEC motion and USDAW amendment received identical votes. If a single constituency delegate voted in favour of the NEC motion in the first ballot, rather than for the USDAW amendment, then the 30:30:40 proposal would have been defeated. USDAW delegates could then cast their 429,000 votes in favour of the GMWU amendment. If the AUEW delegation (928,000 votes) supported the GMWU instead of abstaining in the second ballot, then the CLPD would have been similarly defeated. Nonetheless, as Benn ambitiously exclaimed, the Wembley reforms would 'never be reversed and nothing will be the same again'.⁵⁹ Put in context with his narrow defeat in the deputy-leadership contest nine months later, the Wembley result showed that the Labour Left had reached its summit.

⁵⁷ The actual NEC proposal was 33% (PLP): 33% (CLPs): 33% (Trade Unions): 1% (Socialist Societies). Other proposed amendments: (1) 38:30:30:2 moved by COHSE; (2) 30:40:30 moved by Wokingham CLP; (3) 33.3:33.3:33.3 moved by New Forest CLP; (4) 50:25:25 moved by GMWU; and (5) 75:10:10:5 moved by AUEW.

⁵⁸ cited in Seyd (1987), p.120

⁵⁹ Benn (1992), p.70

Yet even here – at its undisputed high-point – the Left’s majority position remained only ‘wafer-thin’.

Motion	Preliminary	First ballot	Second ballot	Third ballot
Round 1: ⁶⁰				
Electoral College at conference	6,238,000			
Individual balloting and other options:	882,000			
Round 2: ⁶¹				
NEC (33:33:33:1)		1,763,000	1,757,000	-
COHSE (38:30:30:2)		192,000	-	-
Wokingham (30:40:30)		59,000	-	-
USDAW (30:30:40)		1,763,000	1,813,000	3,375,000
New Forest (33.3:33.3:33.3)		24,000	-	-
GMWU (50:25:25)		2,386,000	2,685,000	2,685,000
AUEW (75:10:10:5)		992,000	-	-
<i>Total votes cast</i>	<i>7,120,000</i>	<i>7,179,000</i>	<i>6,255,000</i>	<i>6,240,000</i>

Table 9: Voting for the electoral college at the Wembley Special Conference 1981
Source: NEC Report 1981, Report of the Special Rules Revision Conference 1981, pp. 135, 149

At the party conference in October 1981, the CLPD and RFMC brought forward their proposals to reform the procedures governing the approval of Labour’s election manifestos, deferred from the previous year’s conference. Fresh from victory at Wembley, delegates were expected to readily endorse the amendment of Clause 5, transferring sovereignty over Labour’s election programmes to the NEC. Despite the opposition of party leaders, delegates narrowly approved (by 209,000 votes) the CLPD’s broadly worded motion favouring reform.⁶² However, when the Tottenham and Wallasey parties eventually moved the constitutional amendment after the general debate, the NEC recommended the rejection of the proposals. The CLPD’s amendment was duly defeated by 3,254,000 to 3,791,000 votes.⁶³ As Seyd reported, the CLPD’s amendment was defeated through the accidental miscasting of USDAW votes.⁶⁴ Whereas USDAW played a crucial role in delivering victory for the CLPD on the electoral college issue nine months before, they unwittingly contributed to its own defeat on the third fundamental pillar of constitutional reform. In 1982, the CLPD announced that it would no longer campaign ‘on the question of control over the manifesto’, advising supporters to ‘now

⁶⁰ Preliminary voting on the options for debate published in the Conference Arrangements Committee report. The report included five options: (1) to establish an electoral college of party conference delegates; (2) postal electoral college; (3) separate electoral colleges; (4) ballot of individual members; and (5) miscellaneous amendments. An earlier vote questioning the report was lost by 5,060,000 to 1,936,000 votes. see NEC Report 1981, pp.122, 124

⁶¹ The CAC report determined that balloting would continue until one option received more than 50% of total votes cast

⁶² LPACR (1981), p.210

⁶³ LPACR (1981), p.212

⁶⁴ Seyd (1987), p.124

accept the status quo' and concentrate upon party unity and the election of a Labour government.⁶⁵

Between 1979 and 1981 the CLPD achieved landmark victories in reforming Labour's constitution and furthering the Left's agenda for greater intra-party democracy and grassroots power. Although the CLPD lost the manifesto fight, it revolutionised the systems for electing party leaders and selecting parliamentary candidates. But, the successes of the CLPD in restructuring the prevailing balance of internal power directly oxygenated the fragmentation of the PLP. By the end of 1981, twenty-five Labour MPs had defected to the new SDP, albeit that no trade union or constituency party voted to disaffiliate from the party. The new electoral college was activated in October 1981 to decide the outcome of Tony Benn's deputy-leadership challenge. During the 1979-83 Parliament, more than one-third of all local parties used the new reselection procedures, resulting in the de-selection of eight incumbent Labour MPs.⁶⁶ The candidates chosen in their place were invariably drawn from the left of the party.

The Wembley reforms proudly symbolised the peak of CLPD influence inside the Labour Party. Subsequently, the group concentrated on other issues of grassroots democracy. For example, CLPD activists complained that party leaders undermined the legitimate candidacy of Peter Tatchell in the Bermondsey by-election in February 1983. The CLPD executive suggested that 'for the NEC to set itself up as the Thought Police guarding the ideological purity of the party, the exact criteria of which depends on variations in the NEC's composition, is intolerable'. Following the exclusion of Tariq Ali from the shortlist in Hornsey, the CLPD concluded that such narrow conceptions 'of the criteria for party membership invariably required detailed tests of ideological soundness', a practice which was 'totally alien to the party's tradition'. The CLPD was also concerned that the on-going enquiry into the activities of Militant raised key democratic considerations concerning the 'desirability of ideological tests'. By opposing the remit of the enquiry and the subsequent expulsion of Militant's editorial board, the CLPD declared the importance of retaining 'the freedom of Labour Party members to hold divergent views'. A truly democratic and 'politically lively party', it suggested, 'requires

⁶⁵ CLPD Newsletter 25, 04.82

⁶⁶ Geekie and Levy (1988), p.478; Seyd (1987), p.129

freedom of discussion of proposals for alternative policies in order to be able to choose between them'.⁶⁷

The Hayward-Hughes report into Militant, published in June 1982, recommended the establishment of a register of non-affiliated groups conforming to Labour's constitutional criteria for sub-group organisation.⁶⁸ The registration issue deeply divided the CLPD and its executive committee. As Vladimir Derer observed with some acrimony, the disagreements within the group were

“...symptomatic of the difference of approach which broadly divides most of the comrades who ‘founded’ CLPD or joined it during its early stages, from those who did so mainly once CLPD proved to be successful...CLPD has campaigned for conference sovereignty right from the start...if it does not wish to lose its credibility, CLPD must comply”.⁶⁹

Other CLPD activists disagreed, suggesting that the introduction of a register would lead to inevitable disunity and further expulsions. Nigel Williamson observed that

“...as democratic socialists, of course we accept the supremacy of conference...[but] we must also reconcile that with the protection of the rights of minorities. If we accept the register now, we must inevitably later accept expulsions. Both are an unacceptable infringement of the rights of individuals and groups and, as such, undermine us a democratic socialist party”.⁷⁰

The CLPD executive resolved to decide the matter through a consultative ballot of all individual and affiliated members. The results of the ballot revealed the true extent of internal division over the registration issue. As Table 10 highlights, the CLPD's London members were more opposed to registration than those outside the capital. Constituency affiliates were also slightly more supportive than local branches. The trade unions remained deeply divided, especially between their national (divisional) executives and local union branches.

⁶⁷ CLPD Newsletter 25, 04.82

⁶⁸ The NEC agreed to establish the register in June 1982, and this was endorsed at the 1982 party conference; see LPACR 1982, p.52. In practice, however, the register was a device by which to legitimise the ineligibility of Militant activists for Labour party membership. Those groups who chose not to register (including SERA and Labour CND) were merely excluded from the party conference diary, and none of their members were subsequently expelled from the party as a result of non-registration.

⁶⁹ Derer and Willsman, CLPD Bulletin 5, 11.82

⁷⁰ Williamson, CLPD Bulletin 5, 11.82

	N	Response	For	Against
Individuals				
London	410	70%	47%	53%
Outside	615	64%	53%	47%
Labour Party				
CLPs	141	46%	55%	45%
Branches	85	48%	49%	51%
Other	30	37%	36%	64%
Trade Unions				
National/Divisional	45	18%	88%	12%
Branches	110	36%	45%	55%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1536</i>	<i>55%</i>	<i>50.6%</i>	<i>49.4%</i>

Table 10: Results of CLPD consultative ballot on the register of non-affiliated groups, 1982

Source: CLPD Bulletin 6, December 1982

With the registration issue resolved, albeit divisively, the CLPD turned its attention to improving the representation of women and ethnic communities inside party structures. In September 1980 the CLPD launched its own Women's Action Committee and, thereafter, the group's executive published occasional reports from the committee inside CLPD newsletters and bulletins.⁷¹ After the 1983 election, the CLPD endorsed positive discrimination by proposing the inclusion of at least one woman on each shortlist of parliamentary candidates. The CLPD also sought autonomy for Labour's annual Women's Conference, both in selecting the membership of the NEC's women's section and in forwarding priority motions for debate at the party's annual conference.⁷²

The CLPD favoured the introduction autonomous Black Sections for the representation of party members from ethnic communities. In 1985, the CLPD executive proposed model resolutions guaranteeing 'the right of black party members to set up their own sections in the same way as women and young members, where they so desire'. Kinnock vehemently opposed the idea of Black Sections.⁷³ The group fiercely rejected the creation of the NEC's black and Asian 'advisory' group, postulating that it was 'a deliberate attempt to prevent the mass of black members and potential members from organising and speaking for themselves'.⁷⁴

Despite the laudable attention of the CLPD in rectifying grassroots under-representation, the group was unable to conceal how far it had retreated from the great schema of intra-party democracy trumpeted in the early-1980s. The CLPD's retreat occurred, in large

⁷¹ CLPD Newsletter 20, 09.80

⁷² CLPD Newsletter 27, 05.83; CLPD Newsletter 29, 04.84

⁷³ CLPD Newsletter 31, 05.85

⁷⁴ CLPD Newsletter 34, 09.86

part, because of a significant downturn in group membership (and financial resources) after 1982. As Table 11 below reveals, the sharp increase in CLPD membership neatly coincided with its organisational successes between 1979 and 1981. But, by 1986, its membership had declined to pre-1979 levels.

	Individual Membership	Affiliated Membership
1974	60	6
1975	140	32
1976	248	94
1977	305	173
1978	289	214
1979	443	294
1980	807	400
1981	1016	438
1982	1203	443
1983	1081	354
1984	668	298
1985	513	226
1986	574	188

Table 11: CLPD Membership 1974-1986⁷⁵

Source: Data adapted from Seyd (1987), p.87; Panitch and Leys (1997), p.165

The typology of factional organisation suggested by Richard Rose revealed the existence in modern parties of temporary ad-hoc groups concentrating on a narrow range of political issues. As we have seen, the exclusivity of the CLPD’s emphases on issues of intra-party democracy, together with its relatively short period of influence over the wider party, typified it as an important case study of the ad-hoc issue grouping. Moreover, the decline in CLPD membership after 1983 suggested that the group may have been used by the Labour Left more generally as a useful organisational ‘vehicle’ by which to play-out a series of structural contests with party leaders, particularly in determining the balance of power within the party. As Vladimir Derer concluded in 1986, the group ‘clearly cannot hope to regain the broad support for its demands that it once enjoyed’. The decline of the CLPD also reflected the broader fragmentation of the Labour Left itself:

“Since 1982, the CLPD started to lose support, partly because it failed to convince most of the ‘hard’ and ‘far’ left that in the new situation a different strategy is appropriate...the disunity which these disagreements produced reduced CLPD’s attraction...the tactics which proved so effective in securing [our] demands were also rejected with the far and hard left going back to its ‘principled’ posturing and the soft-left seeking (rather pathetically) to gain the ear of the leadership”.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Affiliated membership included CLPs and local branches, trades unions and shop stewards committees, co-operative societies, branches of Labour Young Socialists, and university Labour clubs.

⁷⁶ CLPD Bulletin 11, 01.86

In 1986, the CLPD joined with other left-wing groups in forming *Labour Left Liaison*. It remained in relative obscurity thereafter, albeit that many older party members paid fond testament to the CLPD for the ground-breaking constitutional reforms it managed to effect after 1979. The CLPD played a marginal role in opposing OMOV in 1993 and in the revision of Clause 4 in 1995. Under New Labour, the position of the CLPD as a champion of grassroots democracy was evidently undermined by the growth of the 'Grassroots Alliance' and other nebulous groupings like 'Labour Reform'. Without the CLPD, nonetheless, Labour would have undoubtedly been a very different and, arguably, a much less representative political party.

Faction – the Militant Tendency

The Militant Tendency is one of the best examples of Rose's ideal-type of faction organisation. The origins of Militant rest in the immediate post-war years, a period in which British politics witnessed the creation of several far-left revolutionary groupings. The direct organisational lineage of Militant dates back to the formation of the Revolutionary Socialist League in 1955, which was itself established through bitter factional rivalries following the dissolution of the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1950.⁷⁷ Like Militant of the early-1980s, the RSL established sizeable grassroots support, especially in Liverpool. The RSL developed links with the Socialist Workers Federation, a small Marxist group operating on Merseyside in the mid-1950s led by Eric Heffer. The RSL paid close attention to building strategic relationships with the Labour Party, and the question of whether or not Trotskyite groups should engage in covert strategies of entryism in order to build support for a common revolutionary programme. Heffer was initially opposed to 'comrades being in the Labour Party'.⁷⁸ The RSL leadership disagreed, and thereafter urged supporters to participate as ordinary party members. Ted Grant suggested that

⁷⁷ Three different factions split from the RCP during the 1950s. (1) the RSL (led by Ted Grant) later to become the Militant Tendency in 1964. (2) 'the Group' (led by Gerry Healey) which was renamed as the Socialist Labour League and expelled from the Labour Party in 1959, again renamed as the Workers Revolutionary Party in 1973. (3) the Socialist Review Group (led by Tony Cliff), renamed as the International Socialists in 1962 and as the Socialist Workers' Party in 1977. See Appendix 1

⁷⁸ Letter from Eric Heffer to Jimmy Deane, 31st March 1957; Deane Collection, Manchester Metropolitan University

“It would be the height of stupidity to abandon work within the LP [Labour Party] now and to launch into ‘independent’ adventures after a decade or more of work...we have to establish ourselves as a tendency in the Labour Movement’.⁷⁹

In 1962, the RSL adopted a constitutional framework which established the basic organisational form of the faction, providing for branches, districts, national and executive committees. The document also enshrined the pre-eminence of entryist practice, declaring that ‘all members of the RSL are required to enter the mass organisations of the working class’ for the purposes of ‘fulfilling the aims of the party’.⁸⁰

The Militant Tendency was created out of the RSL’s decision to alter its publications strategy. The existing newspaper, *Socialist Fight*, was renamed in June 1964 as *Militant – for Youth and Labour*, borrowing the name from the American Socialist Workers’ Party journal.⁸¹ Ever since, Militant used the publication of newspapers and theoretical expositions as vital elements necessary for conveying its political message to the grassroots of the Labour movement, and for repudiating suggestions that it engaged in anti-constitutional entryism. In Militant’s early years, the size of its active membership meant that it need not obscure itself. But, as membership grew during the 1970s, the Tendency started to use its printing and publishing operations as a method for concealing an elaborate political organisation. In February 1971, Militant purchased the lease on the ILP’s former printing press in Bethnal Green, and it set up administrative offices nearby in Hackney. Following Militant’s successful acquisition of local authority development grants from Tower Hamlets council, Militant subsequently moved its entire printing operation to Cambridge Heath in south Hackney.

Militant maintained a highly structured organisation at both the national and regional levels. The Tendency operated twelve administrative regions and fourteen regional offices.⁸² Militant’s local organisation was designed to occupy different boundaries to those used by Labour, presumably to cause confusion to party officials, and thereby to

⁷⁹ ‘Problems of Entrism’ (RSL internal document), March 1959; Deane Collection, Manchester Metropolitan University

⁸⁰ Constitution of the Revolutionary Socialist League; Deane Collection, Manchester Metropolitan University.

⁸¹ During the 1930s, the American SWP published a photograph of Trotsky reading its newspaper *Militant*.

⁸² Regions: London, Southern, South Western, West Midlands, Eastern, East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside, Manchester and Lancashire, Merseyside, Northern, Scotland, and Wales. Offices: London, Brighton, Bristol, Birmingham, Harlow, Hull, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Swansea and Cardiff

minimise the likelihood of exposure. Within each region, Militant established district organisations to cover cities and counties, and within each district several branches were formed to cover small towns or city communities. In practice, the boundaries of Militant branches usually replicated those of parliamentary constituencies. This enabled local Militant members to become legitimate activists in their own local constituency parties.

Local editorial boards were charged with management oversight of Militant's regional organisational structures. Theoretically, members of the branch and district organisations would routinely elect each editorial board. In reality, they tended to be self-nominating groups of senior Militant activists. During the 1960s and early-1970s, the existence of a small and heavily clustered membership base meant that Militant's local structure remained rather undeveloped. Even at the height of Militant's popularity after 1979, where the Tendency managed over 400 branch and district groups, it continued to lack organisational structures in less populated and politically unsympathetic areas of the country. Although Militant leaders boasted that the number of 'supporters' had risen from around 1,500 in 1979 to more than 8,000 by 1986, it is impossible to substantiate their claims.⁸³

Throughout all levels of Militant's organisational structure, the influence of the national leadership remained sacrosanct. All policy and strategic communications were agreed at the centre and passed down to activists in local branches via regional and district organisers. Militant activists were responsible for making contact with other supporters, and they were given strict targets for paper sales and recruitment. Local activists were invited to quarterly 'aggregate' meetings at the district level, and annually at the regional level. But, the grassroots Militant activist enjoyed only infrequent contact with senior national officers, usually only as new recruits at regular weekend workshops designed to 'educate' them in the detail of Marxist-Leninist and Trotskyite political thought.

The main regular activity for the ordinary supporter involved the sale of Militant publications, principally its weekly newspaper *Militant*. These activities held much wider strategic importance. Militant activists were not only responsible for the sale of publications, but also for making contact with party members and supporters, and assessing their reliability and commitment to the objectives of the Tendency. The

⁸³ Crick (1986), p.315

recruitment of Militant supporters and their inclusion in peripheral decision-making relied on complex processes of 'socialisation' between recruiter and recruit. Socialisation would not only take some considerable period of time, but also relied on the subjective motivations and character traits of both parties involved. Recruitment could also be very 'alienating' process:

"The kind of commitment that Militant required was bundled together in the form of highly alienating personal relationships. You had to make sure your subscriptions were paid and your papers sold so as not to feel guilty...the unspoken truth [was] that as soon as a young Militant member got a girlfriend he either recruited her or left".⁸⁴

At the apex of Militant's national structure stood its executive committee (nominally the 'Executive Board') which was responsible for the day-to-day administration of the newspaper and the wider Militant organisation. Like regional and district boards, the membership of Militant's national executive appeared remarkably static over time. Since the 1960s, a number of names appeared with particular regularity, including Peter Taaffe (editor), Ted Grant (political editor), Keith Dickenson (administrator), Lynn Walsh (deputy editor) and Clare Doyle (business manager). Aside from their editorial functions, all five national officers played important organisational roles within the wider Militant structure. Taaffe performed the duties associated with a party's general secretary, Grant was Militant's ideological 'guru' and motivator, Dickenson was responsible for administration and recruitment, and Doyle acted as Militant's national treasurer.

The national structure of Militant included a Central Committee which brought together members of the editorial boards with employees, regional representatives, and Militant activists in Labour's Young Socialists. The Central Committee met monthly to review policy and administrative issues and, until the late-1970s, operated systems of 'alternate membership' to provide voting cover for *ex-officio* members absent on Militant business. The structure of the committee was reformed in 1981 to streamline its activities and membership, and to prevent the increasing length of meetings. The committee's membership normally included trusted Militant supporters like Pat Wall and Tony Mulhearn who were not formally employed by the Tendency, but held important positions outside it. The 1981 rule change meant that only 'full-time' officers could hold membership of the committee. The effect of this organisational reform was to exclude

⁸⁴ Barnes (1980)

part-timers from important decision-making structures, which further distanced Militant's national leadership from the aspirations of its grassroots activists.⁸⁵

In the early-1980s, Militant employed a total of sixty-four staff: thirty at its headquarters in Mentmore Terrace and the remainder in the regions. Although Militant leaders claimed that most staff were employed as 'typists, typesetters, layout and photographic workers', in reality they were assigned to Militant's nine administrative bureaux.⁸⁶ Regional staff were charged with the administration of local organisations, although much of their work involved the direct recruitment of members and liaison with trade unionists to further workplace membership. The number of Militant staff compared quite favourably with the headquarters staffing levels of the major political parties.

Militant held all annual conferences (or 'readers rallies') in secret. The existence of covert meetings was of particular concern to the Labour leadership. Following Labour's 1982 enquiry into Militant, the Tendency agreed that its conferences should be open and publicly advertised. On the expulsion of its editorial board in October 1982, Militant withdrew the offer. As Peter Taaffe observed,

"the Editorial Board invites to the [annual] Rally regular sellers of the 'Militant' who are in general agreement with 'Militant' policies and who make regular financial contributions to the paper; it is therefore *not* open to all Labour Party members".⁸⁷

Militant regularly convened at the Spa Royal Hall in Bridlington in the early-1980s, although its annual conferences were cancelled in 1982, due to the publicity surrounding the Hayward-Hughes report, and in 1986 at the height of Labour's battle with the leadership of Liverpool City Council. Full-time members of the Central Committee usually chaired the conference, and most of its time would be allocated to the discussion of Militant's ideological manifestos, particularly *British Perspectives and Tasks* and *World Perspectives*. These documents were approved in advance by the Central Committee, and were normally passed by the conference with little dissent. Any opposition was usually ignored, and dissenting delegates were either expelled or forced to resign. The

⁸⁵ Crick (1986), p.121

⁸⁶ Political, Organisation, Education, Finance, Industrial, Youth, Black and Asian, Student and International; see also Taaffe (1982), p.7

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.7

conference also considered administrative reports from Taaffe and Doyle, progress reports from the heads of Militant's bureaux, and the re-endorsement of national executive members. Taaffe revealed that Militant conferences were 'structured' around various thematic sessions designed to discuss

"policies on key British and international issues; developments within the Labour Party and the trade unions; developments within the Tory Party, the Liberals, SDP, etc; the circulation of 'Militant' and the development of further sales; and the financial position of 'Militant' and plans to increase financial support".⁸⁸

Conferences were closed with rallying speeches from Ted Grant, designed to motivate activists for the year ahead and to suggest priorities for branch activities. These addresses performed a similar role to the end-of-conference speeches by the leaders of major parties and, in doing so, highlighted the historical and symbolic importance of Grant as Militant's political figurehead.

Militant developed organisational structures that incorporated trade unions and other social movements. In the early-1980s, Militant operated inside over twenty trade unions, using workplace activists to convey Militant's industrial message, and to construct a convenient arena within which to conceal an entryist strategy towards the Labour Party. Militant published a number of journals and publications designed exclusively for a trade union audience, and the Tendency also developed a range of sub-groups designed to improve the participation of women and ethnic community activists.⁸⁹

Militant published a number of other documents to supplement its weekly newspaper and trade union publications. Most publications were classified and produced for a narrow readership, although in 1969 Militant began to publish the *Militant International Review* as an open theoretical journal advancing many of the principles of socialist internationalism. Militant also published a number of small occasional pamphlets reviewing the intricacies of Marxist theory and broader issues of concern for party activists and the labour movement. These included Ted Grant's *Entryism*, first published in 1973, and also *British Perspectives and Tasks* and *World Perspectives* as programmatic documents expanding on the policies agreed by Militant's annual conferences. In 1984,

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.6

⁸⁹ Militant publications included 'Militant Teacher', 'Militant Miner', 'NALGO Militant', and 'Beacon' for the engineering industry. The Tendency also used the British youth section of the Jamaican National Party (PNP) to recruit members from ethnic communities.

the Tendency decided to publish only one internal theoretical bulletin for its activist readership, the *Bulletin of Marxist Studies*, which was printed biannually.

The extent of Militant's financial resources suggested that it was a political organisation engaged in a range of activities extending beyond the publication of newspapers and journals. Although it is extremely difficult to discern Militant's exact income and expenditure, the companies it used as 'front' organisations regularly deposited audited accounts with Companies House in London.⁹⁰ But, the regularity of financial transfers between the various 'front' companies, and the general complexity of Militant's commercial activities, has prevented researchers from gleaning accurate pictures of the true revenue (or deficits) generated by Militant. Michael Crick estimated that upwards of £1.4 million had been loaned from WIR Publications to Cambridge Heath Press by 1985. Militant's auditors deemed much of this money 'irrecoverable'.⁹¹ Large amounts of 'hard cash' were also raised through the Militant Fighting Fund. In April 1982, Militant set a quarterly fund-raising target of £35,000. In the eleven weeks to 9th July, total revenue was reported as £24,291. Yet, in the following seven days, the Tendency miraculously raised a further £11,042, leading *Militant* to celebrate that 'we asked you for £1,000 per day and we got it'.⁹² By 1985, Militant was accumulating revenues estimated at approximately £200,000 per year. Militant also raised funds through the individual donations of Militant activists. Crick alleged that activists earning annual salaries in excess of £10,000 would contribute as much as £60 per week to Militant coffers. This might account for up to one-half of their total take-home pay. The extent of such regular donations from individual activists clearly discredited Taaffe's defence to the Hayward-Hughes enquiry that 'Militant is a newspaper not an organisation'.⁹³

In organisational terms, Militant adopted many of the structural characteristics of a fully-fledged political party. Despite Taaffe's claims to the contrary, the national Militant organisation maintained a branch-based structure at the local level, and its 'supporters' and 'newspaper sellers' were, in fact, individual members who paid regular subscriptions to support the work of the organisation. Militant maintained a clearly defined (albeit self-

⁹⁰ The Militant Tendency operated three front companies: WIR Publications Ltd, Cambridge Heath Press Ltd. and Eastway Offset Ltd.

⁹¹ Crick (1986), p.136

⁹² *Militant*, 16.07.82

⁹³ Taaffe (1982) p.2; see also *Militant*, 22.10.82

perpetuating) national leadership, and it organised regular conferences to legitimise a distinctive ideological programme. The visibility of Militant's organisational growth left party leaders in little doubt. The organisational structure and political tactics of the Militant Tendency placed it in direct contravention the party's constitution, which prohibited the maintenance of non-affiliated internal sub-groups organised around branches and (opposing) ideological platforms. The gradual fragmentation of the Labour Left after 1982, particularly inside the NEC, allowed the party leadership to accumulate the necessary support for decisive action against Militant. The Hayward-Hughes enquiry was testament to the fact that party leaders had become increasingly fearful of *all* structured forms of factionalism. Although their concerns were chiefly predicated on wider electoral considerations, the emergence of structured factionalism of this particular kind stood in marked contrast to the less confrontational forms of dissent typified by the Tribune tendency and ad-hoc issue groups like the CLPD.

More importantly, Militant represented an alien form of political organisation to party leaders. The segmentation of Militant from the broader Labour Left, the growth of its highly structured organisation, and the political successes it enjoyed (especially in local government) rendered Militant a 'sitting target' for concerted leadership action. Moreover, the secretive nature of its entryist strategy was progressively undermined by its own victories, thus allowing party leaders to expose the clandestine nature of Militant's political operation. Militant represented the ultimate form of intra-party factional organisation. Unfortunately for some, its expulsion was a necessary and logical step in ensuring that Labour leaders assumed unrivalled control over their party organisation. Above all, Labour needed to become an electable and credible party of government. The enduring presence of the Militant Tendency only undermined that objective.

* * * * *

Like political parties, factional groups at the sub-party level are distinctive political organisations in their own right. In comparative perspective, factional organisations often display markedly different structural properties. Some factional groups are highly organised and could easily be mistaken for political parties. Others are much more transitory or temporary groupings of individuals who meet to discuss issues of common

concern but, nevertheless, retain identifiable allegiances with their 'host' party and its élites.

Richard Rose's typology of factional organisation sought to classify groups at the sub-party level according to the different structural qualities they imbued. As this chapter has demonstrated, the contemporary history of the Labour Left suggested that it has, indeed, contained the three ideal-types of factional organisation suggested by Rose's model. The 'amorphous' form of factionalism typified by the Tribune Group closely resembled Rose's tendency. Tribune was characterised by a relative lack of organisational solidity, leadership and ideological cohesion. But, the looseness of Tribune's organisation rendered it vulnerable to infiltration, evidenced by the systematic influx of pro-leadership moderates during the mid-1980s, and the emergence of Tribune at the heart of new strategic coalitions committed to party modernisation and renewal. The CLPD served as a useful case study of Rose's type of ad-hoc issue group. The influence of the CLPD over the wider party was temporary, and the agenda it adopted was tightly focused on a narrow range of political issues concerned mostly with grassroots democracy. However, the exhaustion of its political agenda after 1981 exposed the CLPD to decline and, with time, the group found itself ensnared within the broader trend of Labour Left fragmentation. Finally, the organisational characteristics of the Militant Tendency revealed it as a highly durable and structured political organisation with a stable leadership and clearly defined ideological agenda. In many ways, Militant controversially became a 'party-within-a-party' and, as such, should be readily acknowledged as an important example of Rose's ideal-type of faction. The growth and visibility of Militant as a structured faction rendered it strategically vulnerable to the reassertion of centralised party leadership. Irrespective of the democratic considerations, once the maintenance of Militant within the party organisation became irreconcilable with Labour's electoral objectives, it was summarily expelled.

The prevalence of factionalism within political parties is heavily dependent on the inefficiencies of party leadership in exerting control over party organisation. The Labour Left is no exception. Its zenith coincided with the paralysis of leadership following Labour's 1979 defeat, and its subsequent fragmentation was a by-product of the resurgence of the Michelsian 'iron law of oligarchy'. The exclusivity of parliamentary factionalism, typified by Tribune, could not meet the demands of Labour's grassroots

supporters. In an emergent climate of dissatisfaction with Labour governments in office, the factional organisation of the Left increasingly switched towards ad-hoc groups like the CLPD and towards the 'heady heights' of radical factions like Militant. Both were inherently vulnerable. While supporters of Tribune readily enjoyed the fruits of leadership patronage, the temporary and narrow focus of the CLPD and the 'proto-party' organisational properties of Militant exposed them to inevitable and seemingly insurmountable decay.

7

New Labour's Grassroots Membership

In contrast to other aspects of party, comparatively little is known about the attitudes and beliefs of Labour's grassroots membership. Since 1992, however, we have been able to draw on several large membership studies underpinning an important new literature examining the determinants of party membership and political activism.¹ The Labour Membership Study, undertaken as a central part of the research design of this Thesis, sought to quantify the extent to which grassroots members of New Labour retained a prevalence towards factional behaviour and dissenting attitudinal viewpoints. In this respect, its methodology adopted a more limited focus than those larger studies that preceded it.

As discussed earlier, organised Labour Left factionalism was virtually extinct by the 1992 election. As a significant or meaningful force, left-wing dissent had been almost totally eradicated from the party, effected by party-level organisational and ideological transformations following Labour's election defeats in 1983 and 1987. By 1992, much of the horizontal structure of organisation traditionally used by the Labour Left had been replaced by individualised and atomistic conceptions of grassroots membership based on vertical relationships between leader and member. The growth of individualised membership suggested that a future revival of organised left-wing factionalism was unlikely to occur for the foreseeable future. Moreover, it suggested that in order to examine the prevalence of new forms of factionalism and dissent inside Labour's grassroots party, it was imperative to study party members *as individuals*.

¹ The study of grassroots memberships was furthered by extensive survey research undertaken by Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley in 1989/90 (Labour, n=5065), 1992 (Conservatives, n=2466), 1997 (Labour, n=5761), 1998 (Liberal Democrats, n=2866) and 1999 (Labour, n=1328); see Seyd and Whiteley (1992, 1999, 2000); Whiteley and Seyd (1998); Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson (1994); also Seyd (1987) for a discussion of party membership in Sheffield.

Survey research among party members has typically used methodologies of self-completed mail questionnaires (SCMQ). The first part of this chapter considers the methodological implications of the SCMQ approach and suggests that, for the purposes of our research, alternative methodologies were inappropriate. This chapter also reviews the methodology behind the Labour Membership Study before proceeding to a comprehensive discussion of the survey's results and the trends suggested by the Study.

The Methodology of Survey Research

As a method of data collection, mail surveys cannot guarantee satisfactory response rates. Hence, when researchers embark on a data collection strategy involving postal questionnaires, it is vital that the desired response rate assumes central methodological importance. As with other aspects of survey research, however, the SCMQ methodology is heavily constrained by economic factors, especially since SCMQs are cheaper to administer than either face-to-face paper-and-pencil (PAPI), computer-assisted (CATI) or telephone interviewing.² Despite the postal costs of SCMQ, the financial savings made by avoiding the employment of interviewers and monitoring supervisors are considerable, particularly when PAPI samples are randomly generated among large populations. Equally, the set-up and maintenance costs of CATI questionnaires often far outweigh those of SCMQ. As researchers, we should be continually aware that the response to mail surveys might be so low that the unit cost per completed questionnaire could exceed that of any face-to-face interview conducted in the field.³

Mail surveys encourage the collection of data from rare and scattered populations. A paper-and-pencil strategy, with a clustered or multi-stage sampling frame (used primarily to reduce interviewer travel costs), requires the sacrificing of sampling and analytical precision for primarily budgetary reasons. SCMQ surveying is also 'time-efficient' since the despatch and subsequent return period is often less than one month. Thus, for researchers working to strict time constraints in the period between despatch and final analysis, the SCMQ strategy often proves the most desirable methodology. Moreover, the problems of interviewer and respondent error, prevalent in both PAPI and CATI interviewing, can be avoided with SCMQ strategies.

² Moser and Kalton (1992), p. 257

³ Dillman (1991)

By their very nature, mail surveys eliminate the possibility of interviewer miscoding and response interpretation. SCMQs cannot prevent respondent consultation with others in answering detailed questions requiring individual respondent recall.⁴ If the methodological approach demands minimal respondent bias, normally guaranteed only through PAPI (with the interviewer and respondent in isolation), then the SCMQ approach may be inappropriate.⁵ Similarly, where survey questions may be viewed by respondents as intrusive or offensive, it is often more desirable to approach the respondent through SCMQ rather than risking embarrassment or confrontation with interviewers. Therefore, SCMQs can minimise item non-response and premature termination of questionnaires. The mail approach also avoids the problem of non-contact, prevalent in both PAPI and CATI strategies. Although SCMQs cannot *guarantee* response, the use of postal systems and accurate sampling frames can, at least, produce higher levels of respondent contact.⁶

There are a number of limitations in the administration of SCMQs. As a general rule, questions must be simple and straightforward. Researchers should not resort to lengthy and complicated instructions to enable respondents to answer the questionnaire. Naturally, the extent of simplicity depends largely on the population being surveyed, and researchers must account for the style and language employed with their population(s) in mind. Although no written survey can elicit responses from those unable to read it is important that those with only mild illiteracy should not be unduly excluded.⁷

The schema and routing of survey questions should not be unnecessarily complicated. Routing instructions requiring respondents to skip questions, or complete only one part of a question, should be avoided where possible. If these techniques must be employed, then the instructions to the respondent should be clear and concise. It might also prove useful if respondents are able to discern the rationale for routing (i.e. negative response to filter question ascertaining performance of activity x requires 'routing-out' of all questions pertaining to x).⁸

⁴ Singer and Kohnke-Aquire (1979); Moss and Goldstein (1979); Dex (1991)

⁵ De Leeuw (1992)

⁶ Groves, Cialdini and Couper (1992)

⁷ Fowler (1995)

⁸ Schuman and Presser (1981); Benson (1981); Converse and Presser (1986)

All responses to SCMQs must be accepted as final, unless the methodology and budget of the questionnaire allows for rechecking or further clarification. Hence, the SCMQ method is an inherently inflexible one, since there are few opportunities to probe, clarify or overcome question non-response. Furthermore, mail-based researchers cannot ascertain either the validity of the answer or the context in which it was given. It may be the case that individuals respond under a misapprehension, or under pressure either of time or from external observers to the sample. Assessments of response spontaneity cannot be achieved via the SCMQ approach because the methodology cannot guarantee that successive answers are independent of previous ones. As Moser and Kalton noted,

‘In an interview, an early question might be: “Can you name any detergents currently on the market?” and a later one: “Do you ever use Wisk, Dreft...?” In a mail survey, the previous question would be pointless.’⁹

Moreover, SCMQ researchers cannot guarantee that the person who completed the questionnaire was the named person designated in the sample. Although surveyors can request the names of individuals completing the questionnaire, this often conflicts with statements of anonymity included in the preamble or covering letter to the questionnaire. As Scott observed, up to 10% of SCMQs were passed from designated respondent to somebody else in the household, normally from respondent to partner.¹⁰ These transfers typically occur where the selected respondent perceived that it did not matter who completed the questionnaire or where, after initial filter questions, the respondent would be ‘routed-out’ and instead hands the questionnaire to someone else in a position to answer.

In some CATI or PAPI interviews, surveyors supplement responses with various forms of observational data. This may include a description of the respondent’s house or locality, appearance, manner and responsiveness to the survey. Observational data is of considerable importance to survey researchers.¹¹ However, as a method of data collection, SCMQs provide few structural opportunities to gather such observational information.

⁹ Moser and Kalton (1992), pp. 260-1

¹⁰ Scott (1961)

¹¹ Hox, De Leeuw and Kreft (1991)

Many of the limitations of the mail approach may, of course, be overcome by supplementing questionnaires with interviewing. SCMQs can be sent by mail and collected by interviewers to clarify information and ensure questionnaire completion. Alternatively, SCMQs can be delivered by interviewers and returned by mail, the purpose of initial visits being to inform respondents of the aims of the questionnaire, and to maximise participation and response to the survey. These methods also overcome the structural problems of inaccurate addressing and the adoption of mixed methodologies would, subject to budgetary constraints, greatly assist researchers in the inflation of final response rates.

One of the most frequently cited problems of the SCMQ methodology concerns the acquisition of 'adequate' response rates, particularly compared with PAPI interviewing which tends to generate much higher levels of response.¹² However, the problems of SCMQ extend beyond sample response. The characteristics of respondents and the nature of their responses often differ substantively from those of non-respondents. The only means of quantifying the extent of such divergence is to adopt a strategy which goes beyond the postal methodology of SCMQs.¹³

The reported response rates of mail surveys have been extremely variable in historical perspective. Some researchers have reported response rates as low as 10%, while others regularly generate response rates in excess of 90%. Some have argued that samples of the general population reward researchers with much lower response rates than those surveys targeting special groups. However, Gray reported that response to the 1957 Government Social Survey was high as 93%. In 1961, Scott highlighted the example of five GSS mail surveys that achieved response rates in excess of 90%.¹⁴

Social researchers have limited control over three important areas of the SCMQ strategy - sponsorship, population and subject matter. Scott reported on an experiment whereby identical questionnaires were sent to similar samples of the population from three sources.¹⁵ After four weeks, Scott observed that the reported response rates were much

¹² Platek and Gray (1986); CASRO (1982)

¹³ Steeth (1981); Lievesley (1983); Goyder (1987)

¹⁴ Gray (1957); Scott (1961)

¹⁵ the Central Office of Information, the London School of Economics, and the British Market Research Bureau

higher from the government agency (93%) than from either the commercial organisation (90%) or the university (89%), suggesting that issues of sponsorship were particularly salient in explaining overall rates of response to surveys conducted by SCMQ.

There is also little the researcher can do about the population to be surveyed. Scott contended that individuals with lower educational attainment, employed in lower occupational categories, or those simply uninterested in the subject matter of the survey, were much less likely to respond to mail questionnaires. Consequently, if researchers find that their samples include groups of people who are less likely to respond, then they should consider adopting either twin-track strategies of SCMQ alongside sub-sample PAPI/CATI interviewing, or they should reject the SCMQ approach altogether by adopting methodologies based exclusively on interviewing.

Subject matter plays a particularly important part in dictating the overall length of a survey. It is important to observe limitations on questionnaire length, but this often conflicts with the desire to maximise the number of relevant questions so as to facilitate comprehensive analysis. However, there is opposing evidence in this regard. Scott observed insignificant differences between long and short questionnaires. By sending one-third of his sample short questionnaires, a second short questionnaire to another one-third, and longer questionnaires (the two short surveys put together) to the remaining one-third, Scott found that the mean response to the short questionnaires (90.5%) was only fractionally higher than for the longer version (89.6%).¹⁶

Before researchers embark on any one particular methodology, it is imperative to implement a sampling strategy to accompany it.¹⁷ The most desirable method involves the generation of representative samples of the population to ensure that certain types of people are not unduly excluded from the sampling frame. Representative samples tend to minimise sample bias. Probability samples (relative to non-probability samples) also minimise bias since they enable each respondent to have an equal chance, or at least a known chance, of being selected to participate in the survey.

¹⁶ Cartwright and Ward conducted a similar investigation of one-page and three-page questionnaires. They found that the shorter questionnaire generated a higher response rate (90%) than the longer (73%). While this might undermine Scott's earlier conclusion of no observable differences, the variation in this experiment may be explained by the inclusion of additional questions in the longer questionnaire. See Cartwright and Ward (1968)

¹⁷ Kalton (1983)

There are four types of probability sample. The choice between them depends on the nature of the research questions to be considered, the availability of adequate sampling frames, economic considerations, the desired level of accuracy in the sample, and the methodology by which the data is to be collected. Simple random sampling (SRS) selects cases from designated populations using entirely random methods. Systematic sampling selects cases according to a sample fraction of the total population. Stratified sampling selects cases in order to achieve sample representativeness according to certain stratifying variables (e.g. class or gender). Finally, multi-stage cluster sampling involves the preparation of a number of samples, usually geographically distinct from each other, to maximise representation by selecting a small number of cases from each (geographical) cluster.

Researchers using the SCMQ strategy can choose to adopt any one of these sampling methods, but they must be aware of the limitations of the sample before embarking on fieldwork. Multi-stage cluster sampling is normally used where samples are to be drawn from large populations. Stratified sampling demands that certain information is available to the surveyor throughout the sampling process. For smaller surveys, the SRS and stratified approaches are often the most desirable methods. They are broadly as acceptable as each other. But researchers must eliminate, as far as possible, the chances of periodicity (the systematic selection of certain types of case) should they adopt systematic sampling as their chosen methodology.

Social researchers using surveys to obtain information from certain populations must appreciate a range of methodological factors before undertaking their fieldwork. Of central importance is the form the survey will take - mail, face-to-face, computer or telephone – as well as the sampling method to be adopted. However, surveyors must also account for the subject matter of their research, the nature of the population to be surveyed and how, and by whom, the survey is to be sponsored.

The Labour Membership Study

The decision to adopt a methodology of SCMQ, as opposed to face-to-face, telephone or computer-assisted interviewing, was strongly influenced by economic constraints. In light of these budgetary factors, the over-riding objective of a mail survey was to maximise

response, minimise bias as far as possible and, more crucially, to provide an important quantitative resource by which to explore several key research questions regarding the prevalence of factionalism and dissent inside New Labour. Given the 'delicate' subject matter of these questions and the importance of eliciting other data on members' social characteristics, attitudes, and levels of activism, it was decided to formulate a generalist survey rather than one exclusively oriented around questions of dissent and factionalism. The available budget, which included printing and postal costs, provided for a sample base of, at most, 600 randomly selected party members.

The questionnaire was tested before the 1997 election among 30 party members (5% of the final sample) in Oxford's Central ward. The response rate was 64%. A small number of primarily textual amendments to the questionnaire were made in light of the pilot data. It is important not to place undue empirical weight on data extrapolated from a small base, but the response to the pilot study suggested that a postal methodology was feasible and, moreover, the headline frequencies implied that key research questions could be examined using survey research.

Unfortunately, the party's headquarters withdrew long-agreed support for the survey 'due to the impending general election'. It was no longer possible to randomly select members using the National Membership System and, expectant of election victory, party officials could not guarantee an early resolution to this delay. To overcome these difficulties, it was decided to implement a case selection strategy that utilised the membership lists held by local parties.¹⁸ It was agreed with the Oxford West party that a sample of 200 members would be drawn from their lists. The remaining part of the sample would be divided equally between two other sampling points.

The case selection strategy was designed to produce two comparators to the membership of the Oxford West party. It was particularly important to include different types of constituency, incorporating a variety of socio-economic indicators, past electoral behaviour, the pre-existing membership and recruitment 'pool', and practical issues regarding personal access to contacts in the constituencies themselves. The Oxford East and Tottenham constituency parties were duly approached with regard to participation in

¹⁸ Local membership lists were generated by the National Membership System (NMS) and, therefore, there was no reason to expect that the quality of the sample provided by local parties would be any different to a random sample from headquarters of the whole membership population.

the Study, and it was agreed to sample 200 members in each constituency using their own local membership records. These constituency parties were distinct from Oxford West in a number of important respects.

First, the three constituencies varied considerably in terms of their socio-economic profile (see Table 1). Oxford West contained a higher than national average rate of owner-occupancy, professional and non-manual workforces. In comparison, the Tottenham constituency had fewer resident owner-occupiers. A significant proportion of its population was drawn from diverse ethnic communities, and many Tottenham members were employed in skilled and unskilled manual occupations. Oxford East was a particularly useful socio-economic comparator for Oxford West, but it was also noteworthy for its similarity to the national averages on several key variables.

	% Owner Occupier	% Local Authority	% Non-white	% Professional (AB)	% Total non-manual (ABC1)
Oxford West	70.2	11.4	3.7	43.4	65.9
Oxford East	56.7	26.3	9.6	35.6	55.8
Tottenham	43.8	31.6	38.3	30.1	52.3
<i>National</i>	<i>65.0</i>	<i>21.0</i>	<i>5.5</i>	<i>33.2</i>	<i>56.4</i>

Table 1: Constituency Sampling Points – Social Demographics

Source: Office of Population and Census Surveys, 1991 Census

The three constituencies were markedly distinct in terms of their local electoral characteristics, particularly their dominant parties and local majorities. The Oxford West constituency returned a Conservative Member of Parliament (John Patten) throughout the 1979-97 period. Evan Harris took the seat for the Liberal Democrats in 1997. The electoral landscape in Oxford East constituency was very different. The local electorate returned Labour’s Andrew Smith following the defeat of the sitting Tory MP, Stephen Norris, in 1987. Smith secured progressively large majorities for Labour in both the 1992 and 1997 elections. The Tottenham electorate diligently returned Labour MPs to Westminster throughout the post-war period, except between 1959-1964 when Alan Brown defected from Labour to the Conservatives. Norman Atkinson defeated Brown in 1964. Atkinson failed to be re-selected for the 1987 campaign and was replaced by Bernie Grant, Labour’s leader of Haringey council and champion of Tottenham’s black community. Grant died in 2000. Following a bitter selection contest between his widow and other candidates the leadership favourite, David Lammy, was returned at the by-election with a majority of 5,646.

	% 1997 Labour vote	Majority 1997 Labour vote	Notional maj. 1997 Labour vote	% 1992 Labour vote	Majority 1992 Labour vote
Oxford West	20.2	-13,907	7,652 (Con)	13.8	-17,511
Oxford East	56.8	+16,685	8,250 (Lab)	50.4	+7,538
Tottenham	69.3	+20,200	Unchanged	56.5	+11,968

Table 2: Constituency Sampling Points – Political Characteristics

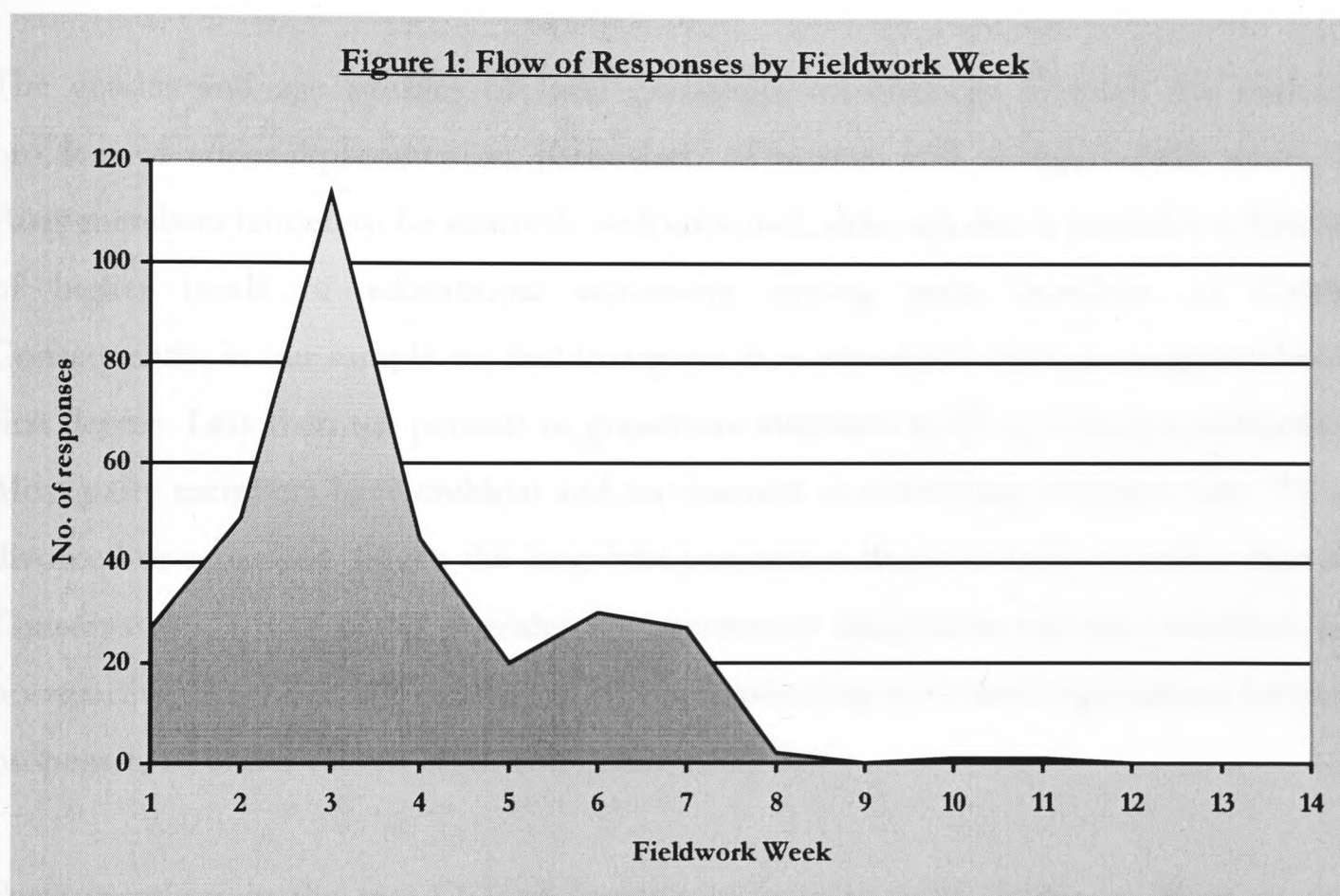
The pre-existing ‘reservoir’ of grassroots party membership varied widely between the three constituencies. In Oxford West, the population profile indicated a much higher resident population of professional and managerial workers, relative both to Oxford East and Tottenham. Oxford East contained a significant number of workers employed in manufacturing and public-sector industries and, as a result, the constituency maintained relatively high levels of union membership. However, the extent of unemployment, low pay and part-time working in Tottenham reinforced its demographic profile as a constituency with a much less unionised workforce.

The case selection strategy also incorporated several important practicalities, not least that the author was able to draw on personal contacts with party officers in Oxford West and Tottenham. Consequently, local executive committees were much easier to approach with respect to participation in the Study, and without the support of local officers the Study would not have been feasible.

The sampling frame of 600 members (200 from each constituency) was selected using simple random selection from the paper samples (membership lists) provided by the local parties. The fieldwork was undertaken between December 1997 and April 1998. 324 questionnaires (54%) were returned using the Freepost facility, of which 14 were ‘out-of-scope’. The final valid response rate was 52.3% (n=306). Table 3 provides summary information regarding the sample and response rates. Response varied between the three sampling points. The Oxford constituencies returned equal numbers of questionnaires (53.5%, n=107), whereas members in Tottenham were slightly less likely to respond (46%, n=92). The flow of response showed, quite unsurprisingly, that most questionnaires were returned during the first four weeks of fieldwork, and by week 6 around 90% of the responses had been received (see Figure 1). Reminders were issued during weeks 4 and 7, and fieldwork was concluded at the end of week 14.

	N	%
Total names: Oxford West	1099	34.1
Total names: Oxford East	1206	37.4
Total names: Tottenham	919	28.5
Sampling frame total	3224	100.0
Number of names not selected	2624	81.4
Number of names selected	600	18.6
Sample Size	600	100.0
Addresses out of scope	5	0.8
Named person deceased	1	0.1
Named person moved/address unknown	8	1.3
Total out-of-scope	14	2.2
Total in-scope	586	100.0
Returned refusal	3	0.5
Returned other reason	1	0.1
No response	276	47.1
Total valid questionnaires returned	306	52.3

Table 3: Labour Membership Study – Summary of Response



The quality of information provided by the constituency parties meant that the systematic analysis of non-response could only be undertaken with respect to the Oxford West portion of the sample. The information provided by Oxford West included the gender of members, their subscription rates, new membership status, and local electoral ward. By comparing the characteristics of respondents ($n=107$) with those of non-respondents ($n=93$), it was revealed that male members were slightly more responsive than female members, and that Reduced and Registered subscribers were less likely to respond than Standard rate members. These trends were evident among both new recruits (under 12 months) and established party members. Grassroots members of the

larger ward parties (North and West) were marginally less likely to respond than members resident in the Abingdon area of the constituency. Detailed information on the characteristics of non-respondents is provided in Appendix 4.

Party membership in Oxford and Tottenham

The 1991 census data highlighted many of the underlying social differences between the three sampling points. As discussed above, these constituencies were distinct from each other in a number of important respects. This section considers the extent of variation between local members in terms of their social characteristics and other key membership and activism variables.

The gender and age profiles of local grassroots membership revealed the enduring problem of under-representation, particularly of women and younger adults under 30. Party members tended to be relatively well educated, although this is probably a function of higher levels of educational attainment among party members in Oxford. Consequently, in our sample we find that more than two-thirds of party members hold a first degree. Less than ten percent of grassroots members hold no formal qualifications. Most party members have children and are married or cohabiting, whereas only 7% are divorced or separated. Given the long held perception that it is Labour, rather than the Conservatives, which better provides for community integration and race relations, it is noteworthy that the ethnic profiles of party membership in Oxford highlighted Labour's propensity to under-recruit black and Asian members.

Party members in the two Oxford constituencies were quite similar in terms of their social characteristics, whereas party members living in Tottenham were noticeably different in several key respects. First, substantially more Tottenham members were aged under-45, although this trend may be strongly associated with the attractiveness of urban living among the young and 'labour mobile'. Second, the ethnic profile of membership in Tottenham reinforced the diversity of ethnicity apparent in the constituency's census data. In Tottenham, Labour was relatively successful in recruiting black and Asian members (23.1%), although in Oxford the picture remained one of little ethnic diversity.

	Oxford West (n=107)	Oxford East (n=107)	Tottenham (n=92)	Membership (n=306)
Gender				
Male	60.4	61.9	59.3	60.6
Female	39.6	38.1	40.7	39.4
Age				
Under 18	0.0	1.0	1.1	0.7
18-25	2.8	3.8	5.5	4.0
26-35	12.3	16.2	23.1*	16.9
36-45	17.0**	23.8	33.0**	24.2
46-55	34.9**	22.9	19.8*	26.2
56-65	13.2	19.0	11.0	14.6
66 and over	19.8**	13.3	6.6**	13.6
Mean age (years)	51.5	48.8	43.3	48.1
Ethnic Origin				
White UK	88.7****	86.1**	57.1****	78.2
White European	9.4	7.9	12.1	9.7
Black	0.9**	0.0***	18.7****	6.0
Asian	0.0	0.0	4.4	1.3
Other	0.9**	5.9	7.7	4.7
Economic Activity				
Working full-time	61.0	62.4	67.4	63.4
Working part-time	10.5	5.9	12.4	9.5
Student	3.8	4.0	2.2	3.4
Unemployed	0.0*	1.0	4.5**	1.7
Retired	17.1	19.8	11.2	16.3
Other inactive	7.6	6.9	2.2*	5.8
Marital Status				
Single	12.3**	20.6	26.7**	19.5
Married	78.3****	64.7	62.2	68.8
Divorced/Sep	5.7	8.8	7.8	7.4
Widowed	3.8	5.9	3.3	4.4
Social Class				
AB	47.6**	34.0	37.5	39.9
C1	35.2*	51.0**	40.9	42.3
C2	6.7*	4.0	5.7	5.5
DE	10.5	11.0	15.9	12.3
Trade Union				
Union member - ever	91.0	92.0	81.7**	88.7
Social Class (self-perception)				
Middle-class	62.3	60.8	47.8**	57.4
Working-class	28.3	29.4	40.0*	32.2
Other	4.7	5.9	6.7	5.7
None	4.7	3.9	5.6	4.7
Education				
Higher degree	35.8*	30.1	19.8**	29.0
First degree	30.2	31.1	34.1	31.7
A Level	3.8	7.8	8.8	6.7
O Level/GCSE	13.2	8.7	15.4	12.3
Vocational	5.7	4.9	4.4	5.0
Other	5.7	6.8	5.5	6.0
None	5.7	9.7	12.1	9.0

Table 4: Party Membership – Social Demographics¹⁹
(all figures are percentages)

Most local grassroots members were employed in full-time occupations. Less than 10% of party members were employed part-time, and even fewer were registered students (3.3%). Of those not working, most were retired. Relatively few party members were unemployed. The class profile revealed high numbers of middle-class members. Four-in-five members were employed in professional, managerial and routine non-manual

¹⁹ **Significance** * 0.1 (confidence interval 10%); ** 0.05 (5%); *** 0.01 (1%); **** 0.001 (0.1%)

occupations, although one-third of grassroots members viewed themselves subjectively as 'working-class'.

The three constituencies contained broadly similar numbers of members employed in full-time occupations. In Oxford, most economically inactive party members were retired, whereas in Tottenham a number were employed in part-time jobs. Tottenham members were also more likely to be unemployed, and the prevalence of inner-city unemployment alongside the growth of part-time working might explain why party members in Tottenham reported slightly lower levels of union membership. Grassroots members living in Tottenham were also significantly less likely to subjectively identify as 'middle-class'.

The party membership was also divided between members joining before 1992 and members recruited during the following five-year period. One-third of members joined Labour between 1994 and 1997, but only one-quarter were recruited under Kinnock's leadership (1983-92). One-in-five members joined before 1976, although the pre-1945 membership comprised less than one percent of the population. Almost all grassroots members were fully paid-up at the time of the survey (98.3%), but around one-in-five had allowed their subscription to lapse at some point during their membership (20.6%).

The three constituencies displayed different patterns of membership and recruitment. Tottenham members were much more likely than Oxford members to have joined Labour since 1992, although this may be partly explained by the younger age profile of members in the Tottenham party. However, it is particularly interesting to note that Oxford East members were twice as likely as members living in Tottenham to hold more than twenty years continuous party membership.

New Labour's grassroots membership in the constituencies was divided between self-identifying 'Old Labour' members (32.5%), those who regarded themselves as 'New Labour' recruits (32.2%), and those who subscribed to neither tradition (35.3%). There were several important variations between the three constituencies in terms of self-identification. Oxford West members were slightly more likely to identify as 'Old Labour', whereas members in Tottenham more readily identified with 'New Labour'. Undoubtedly, the mean age and year of recruitment played an important role in this

phenomenon, although it is poignant to observe that New Labour found greater identification among members of an inner-city, working-class, ethnically-diverse community than among middle-class, predominantly white, professionals living in 'middle England'.

Most political organisations offer membership subscription at various rates to accommodate differences in economic activity. Two-thirds of respondents subscribed at the Standard rate and around one-quarter held membership at the Reduced rate for students, part-time workers and the unemployed. Only 7% of the local membership took up John Smith's offer to trade unionists of a lower Registered rate made as part of the 1993 OMOV 'settlement'. Central monitoring of subscriptions also appeared to be quite loose. Around 5% of members incorrectly paid the Reduced subscription rate when in full-time employment, and around three-quarters of part-time workers wrongly subscribed at the higher Standard rate. Given the underlying social differences between the three sampling points, variation in subscription between the constituencies is not particularly marked. The only notable exception concerns the slightly higher take-up rate of Registered affiliation among trade unionists in Oxford East.

As Labour found out to its cost in the 1970s and 1980s, parties cannot rely on the exclusivity of membership support. Some members resigned from the party and did not join any other. Others terminated their membership to switch directly to other parties, particularly to the SDP. However, it is interesting to note that around 10% of the local membership comprised recruits who directly switched to Labour from other parties. Most 'switchers' were drawn from one of several parties: the SDP or Liberal Democrats, the Green Party, or those more established members who left communist organisations (including the CPGB) in the 1950s and 1960s. Approximately 10% of local members actively considered joining the LibDems or the Greens before being recruited into Labour.

Within the constituencies there were several evident trends in other party memberships. For example, a small number of Oxford West members joined Labour only after leaving the Conservatives or LibDems. In Oxford East, the story was slightly different. Affiliation switching in Oxford East tended to originate among members (or former

members) of the SDP, whereas a number of local grassroots members east of Magdalen Bridge actively considered joining the Greens before subscribing to Labour.

	Oxford W	Oxford E	Tottenham	Membership
<i>Joining Year</i>				
After 1994	31.1	25.7*	41.2**	32.2
1992-1994	9.7	9.9	10.6	10.0
1987-1991	10.7	13.9	15.3	13.1
1983-1986	10.7	11.9	10.6	11.1
1979-1982	12.6	8.9	7.1	9.7
1970-1978	8.7	15.8*	8.2	11.1
1945-1969	15.5	13.9	5.9**	12.1
Before 1945	1.0	0.0	1.2	0.7
<i>Subscription Rate</i>				
Standard	70.5	64.2	73.3	69.1
Reduced	24.8	25.5	21.1	23.9
Registered	4.8	10.4*	5.6	7.0
<i>New/Old Labour (self-perception)</i>				
New Labour	27.9	31.0	38.5*	32.2
Old Labour	35.6	34.0	27.5	32.5
Neither	36.5	35.0	34.1	35.3
<i>Other Memberships</i>				
Joined: Conservatives	3.7**	0.9	0.0	1.6
Joined: SDP	2.8	5.6*	1.1	3.3
Joined: LibDem	3.7	0.9	1.1	2.0
Joined: Green	0.9	0.9	0.0	0.7
Considered: Conservatives	0.0	0.9	1.1	0.7
Considered: SDP	3.7	0.9	2.2	2.3
Considered: LibDem	4.7	1.9	5.4	3.9
Considered: Green	2.8	6.5	4.3	4.6

Table 5: Party Membership – Subscription and Membership
(all figures are percentages)

Rational choice theorists have made particular mention of cost-benefit calculations in individual choice of whether or not to join a political party. In general terms, this typically involves trade-offs between the ‘benefit of belonging’ (i.e. to an organisation of like-minded individuals) and the ‘costs’ of active political participation.²⁰ Although post-war parties typically relied on the activism of large numbers of ‘footsoldiers’ to deliver campaigning messages directly to voters, recently it has become easier for parties to convey electoral messages to voters via the media. This has meant a substantially reduced role for local networks of activist members and other doorstep campaigners.

While the recent re-building of party membership has meant that Labour’s ‘pool’ of volunteers has expanded over time, party leaders have abandoned the post-war imagery of local branches and Labour clubs in favour of more diffuse and individualised conceptions of membership where the demands on activists are minimised. Doorstep campaigning has been supplemented by direct mail and telephone campaigning, with an

²⁰ Maslow (1962); Olson (1965); Verba and Nie (1972); Elster (1989); Hollander (1990)

increasing shift away from the regularity of large and raucous meetings towards intimate invitation-only focus groups. The Oxford and Tottenham data showed that, indeed, most party members were less active in 1998 compared with two years before. More than one-half of local members failed to attend a branch meeting during the previous twelve months, and most spent no time at all each month participating in local political activities. Of those active members, most were only slightly active, devoting less than five hours each month to local campaigning. Only 5% of members regularly campaigned for Labour on four or five evenings a month. This trend powerfully illustrated that New Labour maintained a relatively inactive party membership at the grassroots level.

Tottenham members were comparatively active grassroots campaigners. They were almost twice as likely as members in Oxford to report increased levels of activism compared with two years before. Tottenham members were also much more likely to attend local meetings, and they spent more time engaged in local party activities each month. Although Tottenham members were similar to Oxford members in terms of their voting behaviour in internal party elections, they were much more likely to have served the party as constituency delegates, committee members and elected officers. But the Oxford East party appeared remarkably unsuccessful in the integration of local members into regular activism and constituency representation. More than two-thirds of Oxford East members failed to attend a branch meeting, few served the party as delegates and, like its neighbour to the west, most members gave no time at all to party activities in an average month.

Although local members were relatively inactive in the traditional pastimes of meeting attendance and office-holding, some grassroots members participated in other sporadic, less time-consuming ways. Instead of targeted activism focused around local branches and the constituency party, some members chose to be politically active around certain issues or at moments of local (or national) political importance. Most members delivered leaflets for the party during the previous five years, but less than one-third actively volunteered to canvass voters on the doorstep or by telephone. Before the 1997 election, around 20% of local members joined John Prescott's *Operation Victory* in order to mobilise local campaigners. But most grassroots members continued to play less rigorous 'armchair' roles in campaigning, usually in the display of election posters and through donations of money in reply to local and national fundraising appeals.

	Oxford W	Oxford E	Tottenham	Membership
Level of Activity				
More active than 2 years ago	13.5	15.5	25.3**	17.6
Less active	20.8	17.5	21.5	19.9
About the same	65.6	67.0	53.2**	62.5
Attendance at local meetings				
Never during the last 12 months	59.4	67.0**	47.2***	58.5
Rarely	16.0	15.1	6.7**	13.0
Occasionally	8.5	9.4	14.6	10.6
Most meetings	12.3	7.5**	20.2**	13.0
Every meeting	3.8	0.9**	11.2***	5.0
Activism (hours/month)				
None	57.1	57.7	48.9	54.8
Less than 5 hours	29.5	36.5	30.0	32.1
5 to 10 hours	6.7	2.9**	14.4***	7.7
10 to 15 hours	1.9	1.9	4.4	2.7
More than 15 hours	4.8*	1.0	2.2	2.7
Local committee membership				
Constituency general committee – ever	19.0	11.4***	34.4****	21.0
General committee – current	5.6	2.8*	12.0**	6.5
Executive Committee – ever	12.6	6.7**	20.2**	12.8
Local representation				
Labour local councillor – ever	10.5	5.7	7.8	8.0
National activism				
Delegate to Annual Conference – ever	9.6	5.7	12.4	9.0
Voted in last NEC ballot	74.0	67.3	77.5	72.6
Voted in 1994 leadership elections	88.6	85.0	81.3	85.2
Activity				
Canvassed voters on doorstep	23.4	20.6**	40.2****	27.5
Signed petition supported by the party	44.9	38.3	40.2	41.2
Canvassed voters by telephone	7.5	4.7	12.0*	7.8
Stood for office within Party	12.1	9.3	16.3	12.4
Delivered Labour election leaflets	56.1	52.3	53.3	53.9
Operation Victory volunteer	21.5	20.6	19.6	20.6
Displayed election poster in window	69.2	75.7	69.5	71.6
Donated money to Labour funds	80.4	76.6	67.4**	75.2
Demonstration and Public Protest				
Demonstration/protest – ever	51.4	47.7	43.5	47.8
Local schools	29.0**	22.4	13.0**	21.9
Local hospitals	12.1	15.9	12.0	13.4
Road buildin	2.8	8.4**	3.3	4.9
Live animal exports	1.9	4.7*	1.1	2.6
Bloodsports and hunting	1.9	3.7*	0.0	2.0

Table 6: Party Membership – Political Activism
(all figures are percentages)

Many party members participated in demonstrations and other forms of public protest. Between 1993 and 1998, approximately one-half of the grassroots membership engaged in some form of public protest, typically regarding the closure of local schools and hospitals. A small number of local members also protested against government road-building plans.

The ‘active-versus-armchair’ dimension is particularly apparent in the three constituencies. For instance, Tottenham members were twice as likely as Oxford East members to actively engage in doorstep campaigning and three times as likely to canvass voters by phone. Oxford West members were particularly keen financial donors – possibly a function of wealth disparity between the constituencies – whereas Oxford East

members preferred the comfort of displaying election posters over other forms of active campaigning. However, Oxford members were notably more active in protest and demonstration. Most protesters demonstrated against local educational policy and the funding of local healthcare, although significantly more Oxford East members chose to campaign against the environmental consequences of government road building plans.

Therefore, there existed a number of important local variations in the social and political characteristics of the grassroots party membership, which partly reflected the underlying demographics of the constituencies themselves. But there were also a number of other distinctions between local members. Levels of political activism and individual identification with New Labour varied markedly between the three sampling points, such that we might readily identify sections of the grassroots membership which were relatively inactive and sections of the membership which continued to positively identify with traditional 'Old Labour'. The membership of New Labour was not as homogenous as we had been previously led to believe.

The New Labour – Old Labour Dimension

Following New Labour's landslide victory in the 1997 election, the *Guardian* observed that

"the truth about 'New Labour' is that its working membership (as opposed to its subscription paying membership) largely comprises the same people who belonged to and worked for 'Old Labour'. Far from having disappeared, the people who banged the door-knockers, delivered the leaflets, marked up the canvass returns and manned (sic) polling stations last May did exactly the same, and with no less dedication in 1992, 1987, 1983 and 1979."²¹

These comments reflected wider perceptions of New Labour recruits as 'middle-class' 'inactive' members, particularly compared with longer-standing members from the Kinnock era and before.²² As *Tribune* contended, New Labour members were 'upwardly mobile yuppies, reminiscent of the old SDP, save that they now clutch mobile telephones rather than filofaxes'.²³

²¹ *Guardian*, 07.08.97

²² *Independent*, 04.01.97

²³ *Tribune*, 28.07.95

The implication behind these stereotypes was that New Labour members were drawn from fundamentally different ‘pools’ of recruits. The suggestion was that New Labour members held to very different perspectives, both towards political activism and traditional aspects of left-right ideology. In short, New Labour members were understood to be more middle class, less active, and more attitudinally conservative than other cohorts of Labour’s grassroots membership.

In their 1998 paper to the Political Studies Association, Paul Whiteley and Patrick Seyd reviewed the sustainability of these stereotypes through the analysis of their survey data on the New Labour membership.²⁴ They concluded that New Labour members were *not* ‘upwardly mobile yuppies’ drawn from the middle-classes, as these stereotypes suggested. Although New Labour recruits were quite distinct from Old Labour members in a number of key respects, Whiteley and Seyd observed that New Labour members displayed many of the social characteristics intuitively expected of Old Labour traditionalists, particularly with respect to social class. But, in other areas, their data reinforced such stereotypes. They found that New Labour recruits were, indeed, less active and less participatory than Old Labour members. They were also significantly more attitudinally conservative, particularly on questions of redistribution, welfare reform, and law and order.

This section considers the extent to which the portrait presented by Whiteley and Seyd was also evident in the Oxford and Tottenham study conducted around the same time. Although there were only a limited number of questions which allowed for direct comparison, and whereas the Whiteley/Seyd data laid greater claim to representativeness (n=5761), it is useful to examine whether the *general* patterns postulated by their research were re-enforced at the local level. Were members of New Labour identifiably different from Old Labour members in the ways suggested by Whiteley and Seyd? Or is it that the prevailing media stereotypes have retained a particular resonance?

New Labour and Social Class

It is widely perceived that the birth of New Labour in 1994 marked the watershed in established patterns of member recruitment – that New Labour’s catch-all strategy demanded the recruitment of new ‘types’ of party member. Labour’s shift towards

²⁴ Whiteley and Seyd (1998)

‘middle Britain’, therefore, necessitated the recruitment and retention of significant numbers of middle-class members, most of whom failed to support Labour during its ‘wilderness years’ in opposition. But Whiteley and Seyd observed that, contrary to expectations, these new members were not necessarily more middle-class. In fact, they were peculiarly more working-class than their Old Labour counterparts.

The Oxford and Tottenham study reinforced this contention. As Table 7 highlights, there were remarkable similarities between the two studies. Although most members continued to be employed in professional and administrative occupations, members recruited after 1994 were slightly more likely to be employed in skilled and unskilled manual occupations than those recruited before Blair’s election.

However, the disaggregation between objective and subjective forms of social class, present in so much of social survey research, remains particularly apparent. A significant number of respondents perceived their social class differently from that suggested by their occupational status and economic activity. These disaggregations were especially marked in the Whiteley/Seyd sample, and it appeared to be no more prevalent among Old Labour as among New Labour members. Consequently, in a population where most members were employed in non-manual occupations, three-fifths subjectively perceived themselves as working-class. The Oxford and Tottenham study identified similar trends, albeit lower by degree. In Whiteley and Seyd’s national sample, disaggregation was estimated at around 40%, and in the local sample it was calculated to be around 20%. Although members’ perceptions of their own class indicated otherwise, the data revealed that New Labour members were no more likely to be objectively middle-class than their Old Labour counterparts.

Table 7 also details the gender and age profiles of Old and New Labour members. Whiteley and Seyd observed that New Labour recruits tended to be drawn more from male than from female populations. The Oxford and Tottenham data reinforced this claim, although the measured differences between the two groups were slight. Similarly, New Labour recruits tended to be slightly younger than Old Labour members. Both studies recorded identifiable age disparities. Most Old Labour members were middle-aged or over-65, whereas more than two-thirds of New Labour members were aged between 26 and 45. It was also estimated that Old Labour members were around five

years older on average than party members joining after Blair’s leadership election in 1994.

	Old Labour (n=213)		New Labour (n=93)	
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	60.3	(60)	61.3	(63)
Female	39.7	(40)	38.7	(37)
<i>Age</i>				
Under 18	0.0**	(1)	2.2**	(4)
18-25	3.8	(1)	4.3	(3)
26-35	13.4**	(10)	24.7**	(18)
36-45	24.4	(20)	23.7	(22)
46-55	28.2	(26)	21.5	(21)
56-65	13.4	(17)	17.2	(15)
66 and over	16.7**	(25)	6.5**	(17)
Mean age (years)	49.8		44.3	
<i>Social Class</i>				
AB	44.8***		28.9**	
C1	38.4**		51.1**	
Total non-manual	83.2	(81)	80.0	(75)
C2	5.4		5.6	
DE	11.3		14.4	
Total manual	16.8	(20)	20.0	(25)
<i>Education</i>				
Graduate status	60.1	(37)	62.0	(30)
<i>Social Class (self-perception)</i>				
Middle-class	56.3	(41)	60.0	(40)
Working-class	32.7	(58)	31.1	(58)
Other	6.3	(2)	4.4	(3)
None	4.8		4.4	

Table 7: Old Labour and New Labour Members – Social Demographics
(all figures are percentages)
(Whiteley and Seyd (1998) data in parentheses)

New Labour and party membership

New Labour members were also less politically active than their Old Labour counterparts. The Blair ‘project’ sought not only to extend party membership to middle-income Britain, but also to recruit different types of supporter. Members were no longer encouraged to become ‘activists’ in the traditional sense of the word. Leadership reform of Labour’s institutional structures was designed to transfer power away from delegates, activists and the party conference towards leaders and committees, and to provide for policy-making through thematic focus groups with obfuscated lines of accountability. Blair sought to avoid returning Labour to the intra-party dissent typical the 1980s and, hence, to remove the prevailing lines of conflict between the party in parliament and activists in the party outside it. As Whiteley and Seyd contended, the implication was

“[that] the increase in the centralised control of the party by the leadership, and the shift in lines of communication from a horizontal direction within the party to more vertical

links running from Millbank downwards may have the long term effect of weakening or even 'hollowing out' of the activist party organisation."²⁵

To what extent was the New Labour membership less active in the traditional forms of activism and political participation as suggested by Whiteley and Seyd? Was Blair's army of post-1994 recruits in fact a gathering of 'imaginary participants' and 'armchair supporters' of the New Labour project?

Table 8 illustrates membership activism in more detail. Although there were only a small number of variables allowing direct comparisons between the national and local samples, the picture was especially clear. As expected, New Labour members *are* identifiably less active than members joining before 1994. Approximately three-quarters of New Labour recruits failed to attend local branch meetings during the previous year, and almost two-thirds devoted no time at all to party activities each month. Such relative inactivity stood in marked contrast to the Old Labour membership. Around one-half of Old Labour members reported attendance at branch meetings, and similar proportions gave at least one hour every month to party activities. Pre-1994 members were also much more likely to serve the local party on committees and as conference delegates.

One significant explanation for these varying rates of activism might involve what Whiteley and Seyd termed 'the socialisation effect', whereby recent recruits report lower levels of participation because they have not been sufficiently socialised by activists into regular campaigning at the local level. Whiteley and Seyd dismissed this hypothesis. By comparing the New Labour data with longitudinal data from their earlier 1989-90 study, they estimated that New Labour members were *43% less active* than members joining before 1994. Even *after* accounting for socialisation effects (estimated at 15%), Whiteley and Seyd contended that New Labour recruits were 'some 28% less active than Old Labour members'.²⁶

Table 8 highlights a number of similarities in activism rates between the national and local samples. On the five variables allowing for direct comparison, the trends between New and Old Labour members were particularly evident. Old Labour members were much more likely to canvass voters for the party, deliver leaflets and display election

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 21

²⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 9-12

posters. Surprisingly, they were also more enthusiastic donation-givers than their New Labour counterparts. New Labour members were also much less likely to engage in public protest. This implied that the Guardian’s distinction between Labour’s working and subscription memberships retained an empirical resonance, and that socialisation effects alone cannot explain the relative inactivity of Labour’s new recruits. Therefore, it remained largely the case that Old Labour members joining before 1994 were much more willing participants in local campaigning and electioneering, and that many New Labour supporters paid their subscriptions, gave occasional donations, and did little else besides.

	Old Labour	New Labour
<i>Level of Activity</i>		
More active than 2 years ago	13.4***	30.0***
Less active	23.3**	10.0**
About the same	63.4	60.0
<i>Attendance at local meetings</i>		
Never during the last 12 months	52.9***	71.0***
Rarely	15.9**	6.5**
Occasionally	9.6	12.9
Most meetings	15.4*	7.5*
Every meeting	6.3	2.2
<i>Activism (hours/month)</i>		
None	52.2	60.9
Less than 5 hours	32.9	30.4
5 to 10 hours	8.2	6.5
10 to 15 hours	2.9	2.2
More than 15 hours	3.9**	0.0**
<i>Local committee membership</i>		
Constituency general committee – ever	27.4****	6.5****
General committee – current	8.0	3.2
Executive Committee – ever	17.5****	2.2****
<i>Local representation</i>		
Labour local councillor – ever	10.1**	3.3**
<i>National activism</i>		
Delegate to Annual Conference – ever	11.6**	3.3**
Voted in last NEC ballot	76.4**	62.0**
Voted in 1994 leadership elections	89.6****	56.7****
<i>Activity</i>		
Canvassed voters on doorstep	29.6 (30)	22.6 (14)
Signed petition supported by the party	41.8	39.8
Canvassed voters by telephone	9.4 (12)	4.3 (7)
Stood for office within Party	16.0***	4.3***
Delivered Labour election leaflets	59.6*** (57)	40.9*** (37)
Operation Victory volunteer	18.8	24.7
Displayed election poster in window	74.2 (82)	65.6 (72)
Donated money to Labour funds	78.4** (68)	67.7** (61)
<i>Demonstration and Public Protest</i>		
Demonstration/protest – ever	52.1	37.6
Local schools	25.4**	14.0**
Local hospitals	14.1	11.8
Road building	4.2	6.5
Live animal exports	3.3	1.1
Bloodsports and hunting	1.9	2.2

Table 8: Old Labour and New Labour Members – Political Activism
(all figures are percentages)
 (Whiteley and Seyd (1998) data in parentheses)

New Labour and Policy Preferences

The early New Labour ‘project’ was centred around extensive policy modernisation and, as a consequence, it is regularly asserted that New Labour members will follow Labour’s catch-all agenda more closely, especially with regard to role of the market, welfare reform, and law and order. Whiteley and Seyd observed that this ‘reflects the fact that the leadership has sought over many years to “re-educate” the grassroots party into changing its views.’²⁷ Data from their national sample revealed substantive attitudinal differences between Old and New Labour members. Whereas Old Labour members supported established left-right policy preferences, notably towards public ownership, redistribution and class politics, New Labour members tended to more readily endorse Blairite thinking on the market, tax-and-spend, social security, and law and order.

There are only a limited number of variables that allow direct comparisons between the national and local studies in respect of policy preferences. Nonetheless, on several of these indicators the constituency samples reinforced the findings of the Whiteley-Seyd study. Old Labour members were, indeed, observably distinct in their attitudes and beliefs, particularly when comparing them with new recruits joining Labour after 1994.

The three touchstone issues of redistribution, class politics, and public ownership dominated Labour Party policy for much of the post-war era. Whiteley and Seyd found that on these issues it was ‘clear that [New Labour members] are more “Blairite” than [Old Labour members].’²⁸ This trend was also apparent in the constituency sample. As Table 9 shows, Old Labour members more readily identified with the re-nationalisation of public utilities, redistribution through progressive taxation, and the continuing saliency of the inter-class struggle. They were also more likely than New Labour members to disagree with the introduction of market forces into NHS clinical management.

Across other issue dimensions, New Labour recruits were more ‘Blairite’ than the pre-1994 membership cohort. Old Labour members held particularly strong views on intra-party democracy. For instance, pre-1994 members were slightly more in favour of allowing supporters of expelled groups to rejoin the party and they sought to defend the rights of local parties over the national organisation, particularly in the selection of

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 20

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.17

candidates. Old Labour members also supported strong trade unions by acknowledging their institutionalised role within the Labour movement.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>Public Ownership</i>						
	OL	36.5*	34.6	12.0	14.9	1.9*
	NL	26.7*	40.0	14.4	13.3	5.6*
	<i>OL</i>	<i>23.0</i>	<i>29.0</i>	<i>22.0</i>	<i>20.0</i>	<i>6.0</i>
	<i>NL</i>	<i>20.0</i>	<i>27.0</i>	<i>22.0</i>	<i>23.3</i>	<i>8.0</i>
<i>New clause 4 better than old</i>						
	OL	18.9	38.3	20.4	17.9	4.5
	NL	26.1	36.4	22.7	11.4	3.4
<i>Proportional taxation</i>						
	OL	61.9	30.7	2.5	4.5	0.5
	NL	59.6	28.1	3.4	6.7	2.2
<i>Oppose NHS internal market</i>						
	OL	37.4	45.1	10.7	1.9***	4.9*
	NL	36.7	36.7	12.2	13.3***	1.1*
<i>CLP selection rights</i>						
	OL	14.4	25.4	23.9	29.9	6.5
	NL	15.7	24.7	24.7	31.5	3.4
<i>Resist EU integration</i>						
	OL	2.9	7.3	8.8	41.5	39.5
	NL	4.4	6.7	7.8	48.9	32.2
	<i>OL</i>	<i>4.0</i>	<i>10.0</i>	<i>12.0</i>	<i>49.0</i>	<i>25.0</i>
	<i>NL</i>	<i>6.0</i>	<i>12.0</i>	<i>14.0</i>	<i>44.0</i>	<i>24.0</i>
<i>Reform House of Lords</i>						
	OL	44.0	31.9	9.2	11.1	3.9
	NL	38.6	36.4	8.0	12.5	4.5
<i>Abolish monarchy</i>						
	OL	27.7	24.3	22.3	14.1	11.7***
	NL	20.0	24.4	16.7	15.6	23.3***
<i>Gay rights</i>						
	OL	40.6	37.7	12.1	4.3	5.3
	NL	38.9	40.0	10.0	7.8	3.3
<i>Keep to fundamental Labour principles</i>						
	OL	16.9	34.3	19.3	27.1	2.4
	NL	11.1	33.3	22.2	31.1	2.2
<i>Trade unions too powerful</i>						
	OL	2.9	11.1	17.4**	53.1	15.5
	NL	0.0	10.0	28.9**	46.7	14.4
<i>Keep out expelled members</i>						
	OL	8.8	16.6	18.5	45.4	10.7
	NL	11.2	12.4	23.6	44.9	7.9
<i>Importance of capital-labour struggle</i>						
	OL	9.9	27.6	16.7	28.6**	17.2
	NL	6.7	22.2	16.7	41.1**	13.3
	<i>OL</i>	<i>11.0</i>	<i>30.0</i>	<i>24.0</i>	<i>28.0</i>	<i>7.0</i>
	<i>NL</i>	<i>7.0</i>	<i>26.0</i>	<i>30.0</i>	<i>29.0</i>	<i>8.0</i>
<i>Wording of new clause 4</i>						
	OL	62.0	34.6	2.4	0.5	0.5
	NL	58.9	37.8	2.2	1.1	0.0

Table 9: Old Labour and New Labour members – Ideology and Policy Preferences²⁹

All figures are percentages
Whiteley and Seyd (1998) data italicised

An important part of the Blair project involved constitutional reform and closer political integration of Britain within the European Union. The constituency data suggested that

²⁹ **Recoded variables:** (1) NHS internal market and (2) House of Lords; see Appendix 2 for details of question wording.

along these dimensions the party continued to draw on roughly equal levels of support from Old and New Labour members alike. Although pre-1994 members tended to support the reform of the monarchy slightly more heavily than New Labour recruits, there were remarkable similarities between them concerning their attitudes to the reform of the House of Lords and further integration with European institutions.

The Labour Membership Study was designed to provide a key source of contemporary data on the grassroots membership of New Labour, especially by examining whether Blair's New Labour maintained important social and political distinctions between individual party members. The data revealed that the New Labour membership contained several identifiable cohorts of member which were distinctive across a range of social, political and attitudinal dimensions. Contrary to many of the prevailing generalisations, the grassroots membership of New Labour is heterogeneous rather than uniform and, as such, it has retained some of the key elements necessary for a future revival of membership dissent.

First, there were a number of local variations in the key *social* and political characteristics of grassroots party membership. In large part, these differences were a function of the demographic profiles of the constituencies themselves and, consequently, the prevailing social 'make-up' of the locality strongly pre-determined the recruitment 'pool' of party membership. Tottenham members tended to be slightly younger, more ethnically diverse, and less likely to identify as middle-class than party members in Oxford. Although members in the two Oxford constituencies were broadly similar in terms of gender profiles and occupational status, there were a number of important social differences between them. Oxford West members were slightly older and more likely to be employed in professional occupations than their colleagues in Oxford East, where there were substantially more unionised skilled manual and non-manual workers. Crucially, there also appeared to be few significant differences between the three constituencies in terms of gender. Women in Tottenham were no more likely to hold party membership than women resident in the Oxford constituencies.

The Membership Study also highlighted a number of important local variations in *membership* and political *activism*. The younger average age of the Tottenham membership might explain why, relative to the Oxford sample, they were more likely to positively identify as 'New Labour' members. In contrast, Oxford East members more readily identified with 'Old Labour'. Tottenham members were also much more politically active, especially in terms of time devoted to regular party activities. Oxford members attended local meetings much less frequently and, as a result, they were less likely to serve their local parties as officers or conference delegates.

Second, the Membership Study found considerable evidence in support of Whiteley and Seyd's claim that New Labour contained a number of important differences between *pre- and post-1994 cohorts* of party members – a phenomenon which can be termed the Old Labour v. New Labour dimension. Many of the established stereotypes of New Labour members as middle-class well-educated 'yuppies' do not have much empirical validity. There were few class differences between pre-Blair and post-1994 party members, and Old Labour members appeared to hold similar levels of educational attainment as New Labour recruits. The only significant social differences between the two cohorts involved mean age. On average, New Labour recruits tended to be around five years younger than longer-standing grassroots members.

However, the perception of New Labour members as relatively inactive 'armchair' Labour moderates is particularly poignant. Across the three constituencies, Old Labour members were much more likely than post-1994 recruits to attend local branch meetings, hold executive office, or serve as delegates and local representatives. Nonetheless, Old Labour members have become observably less active over time, and this phenomenon might suggest that within Blair's New Labour there is a creeping disillusionment among older party members. There were also several important attitudinal differences between them. Whereas both cohorts held similar viewpoints on issues like European integration, electoral reform and gay rights, Old Labour members continued to strongly identify with traditional left-right issues towards public ownership, intra-party democracy, redistribution, healthcare, the abolition of monarchy, and influential trade unions. Although there were not as many social differences between Old Labour and New Labour members as we would intuitively have expected, 'Blair's army of post-1994 recruits' remains a relatively inactive, attitudinally moderate cohort of party members.

The existence of important generational differences within a party built on the model of a homogenous mass-membership suggested that Blair's New Labour continued to rest on 'shifting sands'. Whereas the structural opportunities for a revival of intra-party dissent appeared limited, the maintenance of fundamental differences between individual members suggested that it could not be ruled out with any degree of surety.

8

New Labour, New Factionalism?

The strategic thinking of New Labour is predicated on maintaining the elimination, or at least the minimisation, of radical organised Labour Left factionalism within the party. For successive party leaders, modernisation and electoral success has demanded that dissenting groups are denied the organisational oxygen necessary to fan the flames of factionalism. Indeed, the number of individual party members reporting membership (or past membership) of the established Left factions and other aligned groups was negligible. Most groups attracted less than 1% of the grassroots membership, aside from those most popular groups like CND (15%) and the Young Socialists (5%).¹

But, despite the lack of an organised Labour Left, New Labour leaders should not presume that there exists a permanent absence of grassroots dissent. Whereas the proportion of members supportive the Left has undoubtedly diminished, significant numbers of grassroots members continue to report identification with a variety of internal and extra-party groups. Although, without exception, these groups are moderate and centrist by comparison, many continue to advocate policy options significantly at odds with New Labour thinking. Have party members predisposed to attitudinal radicalism found comfort in the issue-oriented politics of pressure groups? Are groups such the Fabians, Amnesty, Greenpeace and Charter 88 taking the place of Militant, Tribune, the Campaign Group and the CLPD as arenas for the expression of new forms of grassroots dissent?

The ultimate aim of Labour's strategic modernisation and organisational reform sought to acquire electoral victory through ideological transformation from an 'old' party of socialism, nationalisation and redistribution into a 'new' party of social democracy, the mixed economy and social justice. An important part of the Blair 'revolution' involved

¹ The headline frequencies of group membership are reported in Appendix 5

the replacement of the traditional class-based vernacular with a new language of reform, moderation and consensus. While this 'revolution' clearly permeated all levels of the party elite and its policy agenda, the grassroots membership of New Labour continues to use a lexicon of the past. Although party leaders typically avoid words like 'socialism' and 'the left', many party members continue to regard themselves as ideological 'socialists' or 'democratic socialists'. Only around one-third of members appeared to positively identify with New Labour. Has an ideological revolution *really* occurred among New Labour's grassroots membership?

The survey data suggested the presence of two distinct factional phenomena. First, a significant proportion of party members were attracted towards a range of groups, many of whom advocated more radical policy platforms than the New Labour elite.² Second, most party members perceived themselves ideologically in ways very different from that expected by party leaders. The existence of both implied that New Labour had, indeed, retained some of the fundamental elements of dissent, albeit they co-existed *outside* the main organisational structures of the party itself.

With this in mind, this chapter intends to examine the prevalence of new forms of dissent inside New Labour's grassroots membership. The existence of these new types of factionalism suggest that membership dissent inside Blair's New Labour is expressed in two distinctive ways. Firstly, an objective form of factionalism expressed through active involvement in (internal) affiliated and (external) pressure groups. Secondly, a more subtle and subjective form, recognisable only through the ideological self-identity of party members as individuals in wider political society. By examining the prevalence of 'new factionalism', we are essentially dividing the party membership into objective and subjective communities – one built on an objective behavioural interaction with groups and organisations, the other built on more subjective analyses of individual ideological and political identity. Who are these factionalist members, what are they like as party members, how active are they, and how do their attitudes differ from others?

² see Byrne (1997) for an extensive discussion of interest groups and new social movements in Britain today.

Objective Factionalism

Objective forms of factionalism are inextricably linked with reported membership (or past membership) of groups and organisations. Consequently, cluster analysis lends itself well as a statistical technique designed to elicit behaviourally homogenous sub-groups of individuals. Cluster analysis reveals co-relationships between different groups, and highlights a small number of ‘clusters’ (of party members) who, within limited parameters, display similar patterns of behaviour.

Cluster analysis is a popular modelling technique used across both the biological and social sciences. As Jorge Luis Borges observed, clustering is a basic human conceptual activity that boasts particular historical importance.

“An Ancient Chinese Classification of Animals

Animals are divided into (a) those that belong to the Emperor, (b) embalmed ones, (c) those that are trained, (d) suckling pigs, (e) mermaids, (f) fabulous ones, (g) stray dogs, (h) those that are included in this classification, (i) those that tremble as if they were mad, (j) innumerable ones, (k) those drawn with a very fine camel’s hair brush, (l) others, (m) those that have just broken a flower vase, and (n) those that resemble flies from a distance.”³

The major impetus for the development of contemporary clustering methodologies followed the publication of Sokal and Sneath’s *Principles of Numerical Taxonomy* (1963), which contended that the patterns of observed differences and similarities among biological organisms helped society to understand the processes of human evolution – thus, pattern represented process.⁴ The social sciences have also long maintained an interest in clustering techniques. Among the earliest studies were those of social-anthropologists who used clustering methods, particularly matrix manipulation, in order to define homogenous culture areas. There are four fundamental goals of cluster analysis:

- (a) the development of typologies or classifications,
- (b) the investigation of useful conceptual schema for grouping entities together,
- (c) the generation of hypotheses through data exploration, and
- (d) hypothesis testing, or determining whether types identified by other procedures are actually present in the dataset.

³ Borges (1973), p.103

⁴ Sokal and Sneath (1963)

These goals encouraged the extension of cluster analysis to the behavioural social sciences. In particular, we are reminded of Goldstein and Linden's classification of alcoholism, Burton and Romney's classification of role terms used in language, and Filsinger's classification of religiosity.⁵ Despite differences in methodology, data type and research questions, five basic steps characterise all studies using cluster analysis:

- (a) the selection of a sample to be clustered,
- (b) the definition of a set of variables on which to measure entities within the sample,
- (c) computation of the similarities among the entities,
- (d) the use of cluster analysis methods to create groups of similar entities, and
- (e) the subsequent validation of the resulting cluster solution.

Several caveats should be applied in the use of clustering techniques. First, most clustering methods are relatively simple procedures which, unfortunately, are not supported by an extensive body of statistical reasoning. Second, clustering methods have evolved from many disciplines and, consequently, they are inbred with the biases of those disciplines. Third, different clustering methods generate different solutions to the same dataset. The strategy of cluster analysis is also 'structure-seeking' although its application, in itself, is '*structure-imposing*'.

Everitt's methodological study of cluster analysis produced an important definition of clusters and clustering. Everitt concluded that

"[clusters] are continuous regions of space containing a relatively high density of points, separated from other such regions by regions containing a relatively low density of points."⁶

Since cluster analysis is designed to create homogenous groups, it is important to consider procedures used in the determination of the number of clusters. Many different groups may be present in a dataset, but we must ask at what point we should limit the clustering method so that the optimal number of groups is found. Iterative methods used in popular software packages like SPSS require users to specify the number of groups present in the data *before* the determination of clusters by the procedure. As structure-

⁵ Goldstein and Linden (1969); Burton and Romney (1975); and Filsinger et al. (1979)

⁶ Everitt (1980)

seeking analysts we become ‘structure-imposing’. Everitt concluded that this fundamental issue remained one of the unsolved problems of cluster analysis.⁷

The Labour Membership Study questionnaire contained two key questions asking respondents to detail group membership. Using the K-means clustering technique, numerous tests of different cluster solutions were applied, and it was resolved that a three-cluster solution carried out separately on each question provided the clearest patterns of objective factional behaviour. In short, irrespective of whether cluster analysis is applied on the two survey questions separately or combined, similar patterns emerged.⁸ There existed two general types of group attracting New Labour’s grassroots members. One type of objective faction is oriented towards the Co-operative Society and the Fabians (and to a lesser extent Labour’s Christian and student organisations). The second type of objective factionalism is oriented around the popular environmental and social rights pressure groups like Amnesty, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Charter 88 and CND. Table 1 illustrates the three-cluster solution for group membership. Cell values indicate the proportion of party members in a particular cluster who report individual affiliation with specified groups.

Table 1 highlights two clusters of party members supportive of the popular affiliated organisations. One small cluster (n=21) is dominated by Co-operative Society members, whereas the other (n=52) is dominated by Fabians. We would conclude, therefore, that if party members are to hold simultaneous memberships of the party *and* affiliated organisations, then it is the Fabians or Co-operative Society to which they would be attracted. Similarly, the second half of Table 1 highlights two further clusters. One cluster (n=33) is dominated by members of Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, CND, Charter 88 and Amnesty International. The other (n=82) is dominated by party members supportive of Amnesty in exclusion to other pressure groups. Consequently, if party members hold simultaneous memberships of party *and* issue groups, they would most likely be attracted towards the popular environmental and social rights movements. The third cluster in both analyses (n=233 and n=191) refers to those cases for which no apparent relationships of group membership exist. In short, cluster analysis revealed two types of ‘objective faction’ – one including party members supportive of the centre-left affiliated

⁷ Everitt (1979)

⁸ For details of the results of a *continuous* cluster analysis of group membership (four-cluster solution), see Technical Appendix 4

societies, the other comprising grassroots members who endorse the main environmental and social rights pressure groups outside the party.

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Affiliated Groups	(n=21)	(n=52)	(n=233)
Co-operative Society	42.9	100.0	0.0
Black Socialist Society	4.8	3.8	1.7
Fabian Society	100.0	0.0	0.0
Christian Socialist Movement	19.0	11.5	2.1
Labour Students	19.0	3.8	4.3
Socialist Educational Association	0.0	7.7	1.7
Young Labour	14.3	0.0	2.6
Young Socialists	19.0	5.8	3.4
Pressure Groups	(n=33)	(n=82)	(n=191)
Amnesty International	90.9	82.9	14.7
Anti-Nazi League	0.0	11.0	3.7
C N D	48.5	24.4	4.7
Campaign for Labour Party Democracy	0.0	2.4	1.6
Communist Party of Great Britain	3.0	0.0	1.6
Charter 88	84.8	8.5	8.4
Democratic Left	3.0	2.4	1.6
Friends of the Earth	87.9	40.2	3.1
Greenpeace	93.9	35.4	4.7
Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform	9.1	1.2	1.6
League Against Cruel Sports	9.1	4.9	3.7
Liberty	27.3	11.0	0.5
National Trust	36.4	36.6	8.4
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	9.1	30.5	8.4
Save the Children	6.1	22.0	4.2
Shelter	27.3	31.7	5.2
Socialist Labour Party	3.0	0.0	2.6
Socialist Workers Party	0.0	3.7	1.0
Tribune	0.0	1.2	1.6
World Fund for Nature	15.2	6.1	4.2

Table 1: Cluster Analysis of Group Membership
(all figures are percentages)

There are a number of substantive differences between the two types of objective faction. Intra-party affiliated organisations are not primarily mass membership organisations. Their relationships with the party usually span many decades and generations, and their historical proximity to Labour has resulted in many groups being deeply embedded within the party’s institutional structures. As alternative forums of debate and political interaction, these groups have no strategic need to replicate Labour’s mass membership. Whereas some groups retain broad and loyal bases of support, many affiliated organisations serve either functional sectarian interests (such as the Socialist Health or Educational associations, or Young Labour), or they contribute to centre-left ideology and policy-making through well developed research departments (Fabians). Unlike mass membership organisations, the subjective reasoning of supporters for personal involvement may be explained by a variety of inter-generational or other factors which, in turn, typically renders them vulnerable to fluctuating levels of support over time.

By comparison, pressure groups organised outside the Labour movement tend to be less concerned with sectarian representation or centre-left ideology. Issue groups usually strive to place generalised pressures upon specific aspects of public policy, rather than working within the Labour movement to re-orient its broad ideological direction. Consequently, many pressure groups have built long-standing relationships with all the major British political parties, the Civil Service, and international NGOs. Relative to political parties, pressure groups offer less rigidified forms of membership, and particular emphasis is placed on fundraising, especially through journal subscriptions, policy pamphlets, and regional or national media events.⁹ Whereas some pressure group members are activists at either the local or national levels, most tend to be only passively involved by using their affiliation to demonstrate loose political affinity for a narrow spectrum of political issues.

Although pressure groups often present radical and highly politicised agendas, their multi-dimensional relationships with individuals, political parties, policy-makers and international organisations requires them to avoid many of the vagaries of traditional left-right politics. In seeking to maximise support and political effect, especially by avoiding portrayal as political extremists, some groups adopt strategies of 'catch-allism'. Issue groups pressurise governments and parliamentarians for specialist solutions to problems of public policy, but their radicalism is often tempered by the strategic consideration to remain firmly non-aligned within left-right parliamentary politics. As with political parties, catch-allism enables pressure groups to attract the widest possible clientele and, thus, to maximise inclusion within state-level policy making.

It is particularly interesting to observe that the two objective factions attracted certain types of party member. Across a number of key social variables, the two 'clusters' of grassroots members differed significantly, both from each other and from the general party membership. Affiliated organisations attracted older male party members from clerical, manual or unskilled occupations who, given their older age profile, were more likely to be economically inactive or retired than in employment or education. Many affiliated group members also reached lower levels of educational attainment relative to other members of the party. Pressure groups, on the other hand, attracted a different clientele. Many more of their supporters were younger, female, professional graduates.

⁹ see Maloney (1999)

There were some differences in ethnicity between the clusters and the general grassroots membership. The pressure groups continued to under-represent black and Asian supporters, although they were slightly more successful in attracting members from white European backgrounds.

	Fabian/Co-op (n=41)	Pressure Group (n=78)	Membership (n=306)
Gender			
Male	64.3*	48.7*	60.6
Female	35.7*	51.3*	39.4
Age			
Under 18	0.0	0.0	0.7
18-25	4.8**	5.1**	3.0
26-35	4.8**	17.9**	15.6
36-45	11.9**	29.5**	24.2
46-55	14.3*	29.5*	26.2
56-65	28.6**	11.5**	15.2
66 and over	35.7****	6.4****	15.2
Mean age (years)	58.7	45.4	48.1
Ethnic Origin			
White UK	72.5	84.4	78.2
White European	15.0	10.4	9.7
Black	7.5*	1.3*	6.0
Asian	2.5	0.0	1.2
Other	2.5	3.9	4.7
Economic Activity			
Working full-time	39.0****	67.1****	63.5
Working part-time	7.3	10.5	9.1
Student	2.4	2.6	3.3
Unemployed	4.9	2.6	2.0
Retired	36.6****	11.8****	16.2
Other inactive	9.8	5.3	5.8
Marital Status			
Single	9.8*	23.4*	19.8
Married	73.2	67.5	68.8
Divorced/Sep	7.3	7.8	7.0
Widowed	9.8**	1.3**	4.4
Social Class			
AB	30.0*	44.0*	40.2
C1	40.0	49.3	42.3
C2	10.0**	1.3**	5.5
DE	20.0***	5.4***	12.0
Education			
Higher degree	26.2	34.6	29.0
First degree	19.0***	42.3***	31.7
A Level	2.4	7.7	6.7
O Level/GCSE	7.1	6.4	12.3
Vocational	7.1*	1.3*	5.0
Other	9.5	3.8	6.0
None	28.6****	2.6****	9.0

Table 2: Objective Factionalism – Social Demographics¹⁰
(all figures are percentages; data excludes members of both clusters (n=30))

There were also significant differences between group supporters *as grassroots party members*. For instance, pressure group members were four times more likely than affiliated group members to be New Labour recruits. In part, this may be explained by the older average age of affiliated group members. Around one-third of Fabian/Co-op members

¹⁰ **Significance:** *0.1 (confidence interval 10%), **0.05 (5%), ***0.01 (1%), ****0.001 (0.1%)

held continuous membership since before 1970. Less than 10% joined Labour after Blair's election as leader in 1994. This suggested that support for the centre-left affiliated groups may be correlated with overall length of membership and, thus, might reflect important generational factors. Thus, longer-standing party members seemed to more readily identify with the affiliated movements, whereas recent New Labour recruits were drawn to the issue oriented politics of the environmental and social rights campaign groups.

Group members were also slightly more likely than ordinary grassroots members to join Labour *after* 'switching' from other political parties – albeit the number of cases in either regard rarely exceeded one-in-twenty. Affiliated group members were almost twice as likely as others to switch to Labour from the Conservatives, whereas pressure group members were significantly more likely to have joined (or actively considered joining) the Green Party before subscribing to Labour.

Party members are the footsoldiers of any successful political party. Party membership, typically involves regular activism to complement the passivity of subscription. But, over time, Labour's rank-and-file membership became markedly less active. Seyd and Whiteley reported in 1990 that exactly one-half of members devoted no time at all to party activities each month. By 1998, the number of inactive members rose to 55%. Between 1990 and 1998, those regularly active members giving up more than 15 hours each month to local campaigning halved from 6% to 3% of the total grassroots membership.

Group members were broadly similar to the general membership in that around two-thirds reported that they were less active compared with two years before. But, affiliated group members were much more willing to devote time to the activities of their local party. Fabian/Co-op members were twice as likely as the general membership, and three times as likely as pressure group supporters, to spend more than 10 hours each month engaged in important local campaigning.

	Fabian/Co-op	Pressure Group	Membership
<i>Joining Year</i>			
After 1994	9.8***	34.7***	26.3
1992-1994	9.8	12.0	16.0
1987-1991	17.1	10.7	13.2
1983-1986	7.3	12.0	11.1
1979-1982	14.6	12.0	9.7
1970-1978	9.8	6.7	11.1
1945-1969	26.8**	12.0**	11.8
Before 1945	4.9*	0.0*	0.7
<i>Subscription Rate</i>			
Standard	50.0****	81.8****	69.1
Reduced	42.9****	14.3****	23.9
Registered	7.1	3.9	7.0
<i>Other Political Memberships</i>			
Joined: Conservatives	4.8	2.6	1.6
Joined: SDP	4.8	5.1	3.3
Joined: LibDem	0.0	2.6	2.0
Joined: Green	0.0	2.6**	3.3
Considered: Conservatives	4.8	0.0	0.7
Considered: SDP	2.4	1.3	2.3
Considered: LibDem	2.4	3.8	3.9
Considered: Green	4.8	12.8	4.6
<i>Level of Activity</i>			
More active than 2 years ago	14.6	19.4	17.6
Less active	17.1	16.7	19.9
About the same	68.3	63.9	62.5
<i>Attendance at local meetings</i>			
Never during the last 12 months	42.9*	57.1*	58.5
Rarely	14.3	13.0	13.0
Occasionall	16.7	9.1	10.5
Most meetings	21.4	16.9	13.0
Every meeting	4.8	3.9	5.0
<i>Activism (hours/month)</i>			
None	41.0	51.3	54.8
Less than 5 hours	35.9	35.5	32.1
5 to 10 hours	10.3	9.2	7.7
10 to 15 hours	7.7**	1.3**	2.7
More than 15 hours	5.1	2.6	2.7

Table 3: Objective Factionalism – Membership and Activism
(all figures are percentages)

An important part of local activism involves attendance at branch meetings. Most party members failed to attend local meetings on a regular basis. But, affiliated group members were markedly more active and enthusiastic participants in the life of their branch parties. Around one-third attended most or every meeting at the branch level. Their attitudes towards local meetings also appeared much more positive. Fabian/Co-op members viewed local meetings as interesting, friendly and unified environments. Pressure group members were significantly less positive. Many found branch meetings boring, left wing and divided, and more than one-quarter viewed their attendance at local meetings as an irrelevant political activity to pursue.

	Fabian/Co-op Active	Pressure Group Active	Membership Active	Fabian/Co-op Inactive	Pressure Group Inactive	Membership Inactive
Boring	9.5**	33.3**	26.5	46.7	37.1	37.8
Interesting	81.0**	54.6**	60.7	40.0	54.3	50.4
Neither	9.5	12.1	12.8	13.3	8.6	11.9
Unfriendly	4.8	12.1	10.1	20.0*	5.6*	9.4
Friendly	95.2*	78.8*	80.5	80.0	72.2	73.3
Neither	0.0	9.1	9.3	0.0**	22.2**	17.3
Divided	9.5	22.6	12.4	25.0	20.6	21.3
United	71.4	58.1	59.3	56.3	44.1	47.7
Neither	19.0	19.4	28.3	18.8	35.3	30.9
Moderate	21.1	24.2	26.6	13.3	9.1	24.1
Left-wing	26.3	42.4	33.6	53.3	42.4	39.9
Neither	52.6	33.3	39.8	33.3	48.5	36.1
Irrelevant	5.0**	27.3**	21.5	33.3	31.4	32.1
Important	55.0	54.5	47.3	46.7	42.9	45.0
Neither	40.0*	18.2*	31.3	20.0	25.7	22.9

Table 4: Objective Factionalism – Views on Local Party Meetings by Level of Activism
(all figures are percentages)

A small number of party members extended their political activism beyond the branch party by becoming local Labour councillors, delegates to local committees, or delegates to annual conferences. As we observed in Chapter 7, one-in-five party members had served the party as delegates to local constituency committees, of which around one-third were currently serving. Three-fifths of delegates had served as local executive officers. 8% of members had been elected as Labour councillors, of which around one-half were currently serving. A similar proportion of grassroots members attended party conferences as local constituency or trade union delegates (9%).

If the centre-left memberships of the Co-operative and Fabian societies were noted for their enthusiasm for local activism, then it follows that they would also be more involved in the management of local constituency parties. The data suggested that affiliated group members were more than twice as likely as the general membership to serve as delegates to local constituency committees, and three times more likely to have served the party as executive officers. Similarly, the perception of pressure group members as inactive grassroots members was further evidenced by their relative unwillingness to serve as delegates or officers. Affiliated group members were much more likely to have served the party as local Labour councillors or conference delegates. However, there were few substantive differences between affiliated group members and pressure group supporters in the patterns of voting behaviour in internal party elections. Both reported higher levels of turnout in internal elections than the general membership overall, and turnout was especially marked in the 1994 leadership elections.

	Fabian/Co-op	Pressure Group	Membership
Local committee membership			
Constituency committee – ever	40.0**	19.7**	21.0
Constituency committee – current	14.3*	5.1*	6.5
Executive Committee – ever	37.5***	11.8***	12.8
Local representation			
Labour local councillor – ever	15.0*	5.3*	8.0
Labour local councillor – current	7.1	3.8	3.3
Local committee attendance			
Never	0.0	0.0	4.5
Rarely	0.0	0.0	0.0
Occasionally	16.7	0.0	9.1
Most meetings	50.0	75.0	59.1
Every meeting	33.3	25.0	27.3
National activism			
Conference delegate – ever	15.0	7.9	9.0
Voted in last NEC ballot	75.0	74.6	67.0
Voted in 1994 leadership elections	89.7	89.3	64.0

Table 5: Objective Factionalism – Local and National Representation
(all figures are percentages)

Although party members were generally inactive, particularly in the traditional pastimes of regular meeting attendance and office-holding, a number of grassroots members targeted their activism towards certain issues or local election campaigning activities. Across a range of activities, group members were more willing participants than the general membership. Again, affiliated group members were the most active. Significantly more affiliated group members participated in doorstep canvassing, petition signing, office-holding and leaflet delivering. On most of these dimensions, there were few substantive differences between pressure group members and the party membership overall.

The most popular forms of participation involved ‘armchair’ activities requiring little or no outdoor activity. Party members were twice as likely to donate money to Labour funds or to display election posters, than to walk around their wards canvassing voters on behalf of Labour. Once again, group members were slightly more active than the general membership. Affiliated group members preferred to donate money to Labour’s election funds (83%), while many pressure group members preferred to display window posters for the party during election campaigns (79%).

Party members can also choose to be politically active through participation in demonstrations and other forms of public protest. As we observed in Chapter 7, around one-half of party members reported involvement in public protest. The most popular protest issues concerned the closure of local schools and hospitals. Although both types of group members (particularly members of affiliated groups) were more likely to engage in public protest, there were several key differences between them. Whereas affiliated

group members prioritised the closure of local schools *and* hospitals over other protest issues, pressure group members tended to prioritise only the closure of local schools. Moreover, the influence of ‘green politics’ had differential effects on group members. Whereas pressure group members appeared slightly more concerned with the environmental consequences of government road building plans, the members of the centre-left affiliated groups appeared to prioritise the politics of anti-hunting and animal rights instead.

	Fabian/Co-op	Pressure Group	Membership
<i>Activity</i>			
Canvassed voters on doorstep	38.1	33.3	27.5
Signed petition supported by the Party	57.1*	42.3*	41.2
Canvassed voters by telephone	14.3	7.7	7.8
Stood for office within party	26.2	14.1	12.4
Delivered election leaflets	71.4*	53.8*	53.9
Operation Victory volunteer	21.4	21.8	20.6
Displayed election poster in window	73.8	79.5	71.6
Donated money to Labour funds	83.3	75.6	75.2
None	15.8	10.3	6.5
<i>Demonstration and Public Protest</i>			
Participated in demonstration – ever	61.9	52.6	47.8
Local schools	28.6	26.9	21.9
Local hospitals	21.4	12.8	13.4
Road building	2.4	9.0	4.9
Live animal exports	4.8*	0.0*	2.6
Blood-sports and hunting	4.8*	1.3*	2.0

Table 6: Objective Factionalism – Local Activism and Public Protest
(all figures are percentages)

The legacy of Labour’s electoral and political crises during the 1980s reinforced the inextricable relationship between factionalism and political attitudes – that Labour’s ‘wilderness years’ were exacerbated by a factionalist left-wing which advocated radical (and often unrealisable) solutions to questions of public policy. One of the most important strategic goals for Labour’s modernisers after 1985 involved the moderation of policy and the eradication of left-wing factionalism. The cluster analysis of group membership highlighted that left-wing factionalism dissipated in favour of new forms of objective factionalism – part external, part internal. One aspect of new factionalism, therefore, is that it includes external single-issue pressure groups concerned with environmental protection and social rights, whereas the other involves the more established and attitudinally moderate centre-left affiliated organisations.

The role of ideology and attitudes can be examined in several ways. One method is to measure members’ attitudes according to responses to a number of questions of public policy. A second approach ascertains how members perceive themselves ideologically.

Crucial to both methods, however, is an appreciation of the extent to which these two clusters of party members were ideologically and attitudinally distinct, both from each other and from the general party membership.

By understanding the positioning and functioning of groups as part of wider political society, we might intuitively derive a series of expectations as to the ideological and attitudinal characteristics of group members. One such expectation might be that members of centre-left affiliated groups would hold stronger opinions on traditional left-right issues like public ownership, taxation, trade unionism and key strategic political goals. A second expectation might contend that members of popular pressure group movements would hold stronger opinions on post-materialist valence issues, especially environmental protection, constitutional reform and social rights. Above all, group membership implies an individual commitment to a set of ideological precepts and policy goals which, in turn, suggests that group members would invariably hold stronger attitudinal opinions than others in the party.

	Fabian/Co-op	Pressure Group	Membership
Public Ownership	65.9	71.4	69.8
New clause 4 better than old	59.0	62.2	58.8
Proportional taxation	92.5	88.0	91.1
Oppose NHS internal market	75.0	79.2	79.1
CLP selection rights	53.7***	28.9***	40.0
Resist EU integration	15.0**	3.9**	10.5
Reform House of Lords	75.6	80.5	75.3
Abolish monarchy	53.7	48.7	49.7
Gay rights	68.3****	94.8****	78.5
Keep to fundamental Labour principles	62.5**	42.9**	49.2
Trade unions too powerful	24.4**	9.2**	12.8
Keep out expelled members	34.1**	17.3**	24.8
Importance of capital-labour struggle	57.5****	26.3****	34.8
Wording of new clause 4	95.1	98.7	96.6

Table 7: Objective Factionalism – Ideology and Policy Preferences
(all figures are percentages and report aggregated percentages in agreement)

These stereotypes are *not* reinforced by the data. First, group members did not necessarily hold the strongest views. On most policy questions, the attitudes of the general membership tended to lie somewhere in between those of the two clusters of group members. Thus, objective factionalism inside New Labour involved one radical cluster and one relatively ‘conservative’ cluster of group members. Indeed, on most of the issue dimensions, pressure group supporters held identifiably stronger opinions than affiliated group members, sometimes by a margin in excess of 10%. Also, group members did not prioritise political issues in the ways intuitively expected of them. Interestingly, pressure group members displayed much greater enthusiasm for public ownership, the NHS, and

strong trade unions than their affiliated group counterparts. Fabian/Co-op members tended to confine their enthusiasm to questions of local party democracy, Labour’s electoral strategy, and opposition to further European integration. They were also much less likely to support an extension of gay rights and the maintenance of strong trade unions in the Labour Party.

Secondly, we must appreciate how members perceive *themselves* ideologically. Two questions elicited responses on personal ideological identity. The first asked members to place themselves ideologically on two seven-point left-right scales, one measuring the member relative to other party members, and the other measuring members relative to the wider voting-public. As expected, most party members preferred to self-identify with the left rather than the right. Group members also tended to locate themselves ideologically on the left of the political spectrum, although there were a number of key differences between them.

	Very Left-wing	Mostly Left-wing	Quite Left-wing	Neither	Quite Right-wing	Mostly Right-wing	Very Right-wing
<i>Fabian/Co-op</i>							
British politics	2.4	54.8	28.6	7.1	2.4	4.8*	0.0
Labour politics	2.4	38.1	21.4*	23.8	11.9	0.0	2.4
<i>Pressure group</i>							
British politics	7.7	60.3	24.4	6.4	1.3	0.0	0.0
Labour politics	5.1	28.2	38.5*	12.8	11.5	3.8	0.0
<i>Membership</i>							
British politics	7.1	55.6	30.3	4.0	1.7	1.3	0.0
Labour politics	5.4	28.5	34.2	15.8	12.4	3.0	0.7

Table 8: Objective Factionalism – Location on Left-Right Axis
(all figures are percentages)

As Table 8 illustrates, the distribution of data pointed to a slight skewing of perception by pressure group members towards the left-wing margins of these scales. For instance, 68% of pressure group members perceived themselves to be ‘mostly’ or ‘very left-wing’ in the British political arena. This perception was shared by only 57% of affiliated group supporters. Furthermore, around one-third of affiliated group members perceived themselves to be ‘mostly’ left-wing compared with other members, but one-quarter failed to identify with either the left or right of the internal ideological spectrum. These perceptions reinforced our earlier findings as to the relative attitudinal radicalism of pressure group members compared with their colleagues in the popular affiliated organisations.

Aside from left-right scales, another method of analysing ideological differences involves the responses to general questions of ideological positioning. Most party members felt that, over the course of the preceding five years, Labour's ideology had become identifiably more right-wing. Group members concurred with this viewpoint, although slightly fewer affiliated group members regarded Labour's ideological positioning to be more right-wing than before. However, there were important distinctions between the two clusters in terms of levels of identification with New Labour. Affiliated group members were equally as likely to identify with New Labour as with Old Labour (34.1%), whereas substantially more pressure group members felt unable to identify with *either* tradition (40.3%).

	Fabian/Co-op	Pressure Group	Membership
<i>Labour Ideology – last 5 years</i>			
More right-wing	89.8	91.0	91.0
More left-wing	0.0	0.0	1.6
Stayed about the same	12.2	9.0	7.3
<i>Self-Identification</i>			
New Labour	34.1	31.2	32.2
Old Labour	34.1	28.6	32.5
Neither	31.7	40.3	35.3
<i>Ideological Self-Perception</i>			
Socialist	56.1	45.5	45.6
Democratic Socialist	22.0	26.0	23.8
Social Democrat	7.3	13.0	14.4
Liberal	0.0	5.2	3.7
Marxist	9.8**	1.3**	2.7
Anarchist	0.0	0.0	1.0
Conservative	0.0	0.0	0.3
Other	2.4	3.9	2.9
None	2.4	5.2	5.4
<i>Social Class Self-Perception</i>			
Middle-class	48.8**	70.1**	57.4
Working-class	36.6**	18.2**	32.2
Other	12.2	5.2	5.7
None	2.4	6.5	4.7

Table 9: Objective Factionalism – Ideological Self-Perception
(all figures are percentages)

The general picture to emerge is one of two clusters of party members who differed substantively from each other in terms of their individual ideological identity. On key political issues, pressure group members appeared more radical than affiliated group supporters. They were also slightly more likely to place themselves at the left-wing margins of the ideological spectrum. But, pressure group members were no more likely than anyone else in the party to describe their ideology as 'socialist'. In fact, more affiliated group members identified as socialists than their counterparts in the pressure groups. This suggested an apparent disaggregation between the perception of socialists as radicals and the stereotype of social-democrats as centrist moderates. Despite their

relative conservatism, affiliated group members continued to identify with the established political lexicon of socialism, democratic-socialism, and even Marxism.

In short, the grassroots party membership of New Labour contained two apparent clusters of party members who held simultaneous memberships of the Labour Party and a variety of affiliated and issue-based pressure groups. Dissent inside New Labour appeared to involve two different types of 'objective faction' – the first oriented around the centre-leftism of groups like the Fabians, and the other centred on the large pressure groups such as Amnesty, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth. These clusters were particularly distinctive. The centre-left cluster was populated by slightly older party members, mostly male and employed in clerical, manual or unskilled occupations. These members typically held membership of the Labour Party for significant periods of time, many since before the defeat of the Wilson government in 1970. In an environment of membership indolence these affiliated group supporters appeared quite active. Compared with other members, they were much more likely to devote time to party campaigning, attend local meetings, and serve as local representatives, councillors and delegates. Despite their activism, however, some affiliated group members maintained identifiably conservative ideological positions on important policy questions.

The popular pressure groups attracted many more professional, graduate women who held party membership for much shorter periods of time. At the local level, they were usually inactive members, and their attitudes towards local activism were noticeably less positive. But, pressure group members were quite radical in terms of their attitudes and beliefs. On many of the important policy questions, pressure group members advanced significantly radical viewpoints. This appeared to imply that there had occurred an unravelling of the historical associations between activism and attitudinal radicalism, particularly the suggestion that party activists tend to be relative extremists on central left-right ideological questions. The data suggested that, within New Labour, the opposite appeared to be true – inactive pressure group members typically hold radical viewpoints on key aspects of ideology. Thus, whereas one cluster of the party membership was represented by an attitudinally conservative activist community of centre-leftists, the other was populated by younger, professional, inactive, ideological radicals who found comfort in the issue-oriented politics of pressure groups located outside the Labour movement.

Subjective Factionalism

Party members can also express their dissent through various forms of subjective ideological identity, the language of which may have been abandoned by party leaders in the course of modernisation and renewal. At a time when New Labour sought to 'move beyond' the traditional debates surrounding labourism and socialism, most party members continued to express themselves ideologically by using an old and well-established vocabulary. The extent of subjective factionalism is considerable. As we discussed in Chapter 7, more than two-thirds of grassroots party members continued to perceive themselves either as 'socialists' or 'democratic-socialists'. Despite Labour's recent ideological repositioning, most party members failed to adopt the more moderate 'social-democratic' language evident in so much of New Labour's ideological thinking.

It is the intention of this second part of the chapter to examine the extent of subjective factionalism. Most party members chose one of three political 'labels' to describe how they perceived their own ideologies. Furthermore, groups of 'socialist', 'social-democrat' and 'democratic-socialist' members reflected one of the most durable dimensions of ideological opinion within the party. Put simply, we recognise the existence of a linear spectrum of belief among party members where socialists occupy left-wing ideological positions, social-democrats occupy relatively centrist (or even right-wing) positions, and democratic-socialists are located somewhere between the two. This dimension provided a useful means by which to consider the prevalence of subjective forms of factionalism among the grassroots membership of New Labour.

To what extent do socialists differ from other groups of party members, and does the term 'socialist' imply a particular *type of party member*? Are socialists significantly different from social-democrats and democratic-socialists to the extent that we can view them as an identifiable ideological faction within New Labour? In a similar vein to our earlier discussion of objective factionalism, four broad questions are posited – who are the factionalists, what are they like as party members, how active are they, and to what extent do their attitudes vary from other party members?

In ideological terms, we would intuitively expect socialists and democratic-socialists to occupy left-wing positions inside the party, contrasted with social-democrats whom we

would expect to occupy more centrist or right-wing positions. In a number of respects, there appeared to be strong relationships between subjective ideology and self-placement on the left-right spectrum. First, a number of socialists located themselves at the left-wing margins in both the internal and external political environments. Whereas around two-thirds of socialists and democratic-socialists perceived themselves as ‘mostly’ left-wing compared with ordinary voters, only one-third of social-democrats shared that perception. Instead, most social-democrats tended to view their ideological positioning to be only ‘quite left-wing’ relative to other voters.

	Very Left-wing	Mostly Left-wing	Quite Left-wing	Neither	Quite Right-wing	Mostly Right-wing	Very Right-wing
<i>Socialist (n=136)</i>							
British politics	9.0**	61.9	23.9**	3.7	0.7	0.7	0.0
Labour politics	7.4**	38.5****	34.8	14.1*	3.7****	0.7*	0.7
<i>Democratic Socialist (n=71)</i>							
British politics	2.8	66.2*	21.1*	5.6	1.4	2.8*	0.0
Labour politics	1.4	22.5	36.6	21.1	18.3***	0.0*	0.0
<i>Social Democrat (n=43)</i>							
British politics	0.0*	35.7****	61.9****	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.0
Labour politics	0.0*	7.1****	33.3	26.2*	19.0**	11.9****	2.4

Table 10: Subjective Factionalism – Location on Left-Right Axis
(all figures are percentages)

Secondly, respondents were asked to compare themselves ideologically with other party members. Most regarded their ideology to be substantially less left-wing as members than as ordinary voters. As party members, socialists located themselves towards the middle of the left-wing spectrum, democratic-socialists somewhere between left and right, whereas some social-democrat party members identified with more overtly right-wing ideological positions. Around one-third of social-democrats reported that they held ‘quite’, ‘mostly’ or ‘very’ right-wing’ ideological positions relative to other members of the party.

The grassroots party membership is divided between those identifying with New Labour, those who identified with Old Labour, and those unable to identify with either tradition. But, there were substantial differences between the three subjective groups. Intuitively, we would expect socialists and democratic-socialists to more readily identify with Old Labour, whereas social-democrats would be expected to align themselves with New Labour modernisers. In several areas these expectations were reinforced by the data – many socialists continued to identify with Old Labour (43.3%) while most social-democrats reported an ideological affinity with Blair’s New Labour (65.1%).

It is interesting to note several qualifications to these trends. First, whereas socialists were twice as likely as other members to identify with Old Labour, a number of them also failed to identify with either tradition. But, contrary to our initial expectations, less than one-quarter of democratic-socialists identified with Old Labour. Democratic-socialists remained divided between New Labour identifiers and those unable to align with either perspective. The spectrum of ideological self-identity is much less clear cut than anticipated. Although social-democrats identified more consistently with New Labour, socialists and democratic-socialists were significantly more ‘agnostic’ than others in the party.

There were also strong relationships between ideological identity and self-perception of social class. Most party members tended to view themselves as middle-class. Yet there were a number of significant differences between the three subjective ideological groups. For instance, three-quarters of social-democrats (but only one-half of socialists) regarded themselves as middle-class party members. Socialists were twice as likely as social-democrats to positively identify as working-class.

	Socialist	Democratic Socialist	Social Democrat
<i>Labour Ideology – last 5 years</i>			
More right-wing	94.0	87.3*	93.0
More left-wing	2.2*	0.0	0.0
Stayed about the same	3.7**	12.7**	7.0
<i>Self-Identification</i>			
New Labour	17.9****	37.3	65.1****
Old Labour	43.3****	23.9**	20.9**
Neither	38.8*	38.8	14.0***
<i>Social Class Self-Perception</i>			
Middle-class	51.1***	65.7	76.7**
Working-class	38.5***	22.4*	18.6*
Other	6.7	4.5	2.3
None	3.7	7.5	2.3

Table 11: Subjective Factionalism – Political and Social Class Self-Perception
(all figures are percentages)

Subjective individual ideological identity also allows us to understand variation in attitudes and beliefs. Intuitively, we would expect the strength of agreement with radical left-wing policy options to diminish with distance from the left-wing margins of the ideological spectrum – socialists viewed as radicals and social-democrats regarded as centrists, even conservatives. As Tables 12 and 13 below illustrate, there was substantial evidence of relationships between ideological identity and political attitudes. Socialist party members were twice as likely as social-democrats to support the extension of public ownership, greater local party democracy, the importance of fundamental Labour

principles, and the saliency of the capital-labour struggle. Socialists also adopted a more radical positioning on constitutional reform, as well as being slightly less enthusiastic advocates of European integration. In contrast, social-democrats were twice as likely as socialists to regard the new Clause 4 to be ‘better’ than the original version agreed at the end of the First World War.

However, socialists did not necessarily hold the strongest political opinions. For instance, democratic-socialists were slightly more radical on questions of progressive taxation, the ending of contracting-out in the NHS, and an extension of gay rights, albeit that in all instances the margin between the two groups did not exceed 5%. Whereas both groups were similar in their support for a strong trade union movement within the party, socialists appeared much less forgiving towards expelled members of the party.

	Socialists	Democratic Socialists	Social Democrats
Public Ownership	80.7	63.4	48.8
New clause 4 better than old	46.9	68.6	92.7
Progressive taxation	91.7	94.3	89.7
Oppose NHS internal market	83.0	84.1	58.5
CLP selection rights	52.3	27.5	25.0
Resist EU integration	12.7	5.7	7.3
Reform House of Lords	77.8	77.5	70.0
Abolish monarchy	55.2	45.1	37.5
Gay rights	78.4	83.1	78.0
Keep to fundamental Labour principles	59.3	45.7	26.8
Trade unions too powerful	9.0	7.0	29.3
Keep out expelled members	27.3	18.3	30.0
Importance of capital-labour struggle	43.2	24.3	17.5
Wording of new clause 4	97.8	98.6	100.0

Table 12: Subjective Factionalism – Ideology and Policy Preferences
(all figures are percentages and report aggregated percentages in agreement)

To what extent were the attitudes of socialists different from those of democratic socialists or social democrats? How *strong* are the relationships between attitudinal preference and individual ideological identity? As Table 13 below highlights, knowing whether a party member identifies as socialist or social-democrat is a particularly important measure for understanding the political viewpoints of grassroots members. Furthermore, on seven issue dimensions the relationship between attitudes and ideological identity was so strong that we could reject the null hypothesis in only 1% of samples. As discussed earlier, the attitudes of socialists were particularly distinctive on questions of public ownership, local party democracy and the inter-class struggle. By comparison, there appeared to be few substantive attitudinal differences between democratic-socialists and social-democrats.

	Socialists v. Social Democrats	Socialists v. Democratic Socialists	Democratic Socialists v. Social Democrats
Public Ownership	.001	.01	
New clause 4 better than old	.001	.01	.01
Progressive taxation			
Oppose NHS internal market	.01		.01
CLP selection rights	.01	.001	
Resist EU integration		.10	
Reform House of Lords			
Abolish monarchy	.05		
Gay rights			
Keep to fundamental Labour principles	.001	.10	.05
Trade unions too powerful	.01		.01
Keep out expelled members			
Importance of capital-labour struggle	.01	.01	
Wording of new clause 4			

Table 13: Subjective Factionalism – Ideology and Policy Preferences II
Significance (p) values
(all figures are confidence intervals; blank cells indicate non significance)

Crucially, there were a number of important social differences between the three subjective ideological groups. Although socialists, social-democrats and democratic-socialists tended to be drawn from similar age and ethnic backgrounds, variations in gender balance were particularly marked. Whereas roughly equal numbers of men and women identified as socialists and social-democrats, male party members were three times more likely as female members to identify as democratic-socialists. Significant differences were also observed with respect to social class and educational attainment. Whereas one-half of social-democrats and democratic-socialists were employed in professional or managerial occupations, many more socialists were employed in manual or unskilled positions. Indeed, socialists were twice as likely as democratic-socialists (and three times as likely as social-democrats) to be drawn from lower socio-economic groups. Around two-thirds of democratic-socialists and social-democrats also attained university qualifications, whereas approximately 40% of socialists terminated their education either at sixteen or without statutory qualifications. Although the three subjective groups tended not to attract party members of a particular age or ethnicity, they retained significant variations in gender, class and educational background.

	Socialist	Democratic Socialist	Social Democrat
Gender			
Male	55.9**	77.5***	53.5
Female	44.1**	25.6***	46.5
Age			
Under 18	0.0	0.0	2.3**
18-24	2.2	4.2	4.7
25-34	16.2	16.9	14.0
35-44	19.9	26.8	20.9
45-54	32.4	26.8	23.3
55-64	11.0*	16.9	20.9
65 and over	18.4*	8.5*	14.0
Mean age (years)	50.1	47.3	49.2
Ethnic Origin			
White UK	79.9	82.1	81.4
White European	9.7	9.0	11.6
Black	5.2	4.5	2.3
Asian	0.0	1.5	0.0
Other	5.2	3.0	4.7
Economic Activity			
Working full-time	63.9	65.7	58.1
Working part-time	8.3	6.0	11.6
Student	2.3	3.0	4.7
Unemployed	0.8	1.5	0.0
Retired	17.3	20.9	18.6
Other inactive	6.8	3.0	7.0
Marital Status			
Single	16.3	19.4	23.3
Married	72.6	68.7	65.1
Divorced/Sep	6.7	9.0	4.7
Widowed	4.4	3.0	7.0
Social Class			
AB	35.8**	49.2	50.0
C1	41.0	40.0	38.1
C2	6.7	1.5*	7.1
DE	16.4**	9.2	4.8*
Education			
Higher degree	26.7	32.9	32.6
First degree	25.9*	37.1	34.9
A Level	7.4	4.3	2.3
O Level/GCSE	14.1	7.1*	16.3
Vocational	4.4	4.3	7.0
Other	7.4	7.1	2.3
None	13.3*	7.1	4.7

Table 14: Subjective Factionalism – Social Demographics
(all figures are percentages)

The three ideological groups were also distinct in terms of membership variables, particularly in length of membership and past memberships of rival parties. Table 15 highlights several important differences. There were slight variations in subscription between the three groups, although it remained largely the case that the rates used by members to affiliate to the party broadly reflected individual economic activity and occupational status. However, socialists were slightly more likely than other members to make use of the Registered rate for trade unionists, whereas the relatively high number of democratic-socialists and social-democrats employed in professional and managerial

occupations might explain why more of their number used the standard rates of subscription.

Variation was marked in two other areas. First, socialists tended to be grassroots party members of longer standing. Whereas around one-third of socialists held continuous membership since before 1979, around one-half of social-democrats joined Labour only after its fourth defeat in 1992. Although the number of socialists joining the party remained constant until 1991, democratic-socialists and social-democrats seemed to join the party at some points but not others. For example, some social-democrats joined Labour between 1945 and 1969. Recruitment fell back significantly during the 1970s, although the number of social-democrats joining Labour rose briefly after Labour’s 1983 defeat and, most significantly, after Blair’s election in 1994. The recruitment of democratic-socialists was more extensive in the 1970s and early-1980s, declining after 1987, increasingly slightly between 1992 and 1994 but, crucially, not afterwards. These trends reinforce our earlier understanding that the membership of New Labour witnessed the influx of significantly more social-democrat moderates than traditional socialists or democratic-socialists.

	Socialist	Democratic Socialist	Social Democrat
<i>Joining Year</i>			
After 1994	23.6*	30.9	39.0*
1992-1994	7.9	13.2	7.3
1987-1991	13.4	13.2	9.8
1983-1986	13.4	8.8	12.2
1979-1982	11.8	10.3	9.8
1970-1978	12.6	14.7	7.3
1945-1969	16.5	7.4*	14.6
Before 1945	0.8	1.5	0.0
<i>Subscription Rate</i>			
Standard	61.9**	78.9**	72.1
Reduced	27.6	18.3	25.6
Registered	10.4**	2.8	2.3
<i>Other Political Memberships</i>			
Joined: Conservatives	1.5	1.4	4.7
Joined: SDP	0.7***	4.2	11.6***
Joined: LibDem	0.0	0.0	7.0****
Joined: Green	0.7	0.0	0.0
Considered: Conservatives	0.7	1.4	0.0
Considered: SDP	0.0***	7.0***	2.3
Considered: LibDem	0.7***	5.6	9.3**
Considered: Green	4.4	2.8	0.0

Table 15: Subjective Factionalism – Subscription and Membership
(all figures are percentages)

There were also particular distinctions between the three subjective groups in terms of past membership of rival parties. Social-democrats displayed a particular tendency to join Labour after membership of the SDP or the LibDems. Socialists, on the other hand, did

not. Apart from a small number of ‘eco-socialists’ who joined Labour after leaving the Greens, most socialists tended not to hold past rival party memberships.

Levels of individual activism also varied across the three subjective ideological groups. Although most members reported similar levels of activism to two years before, at the local branch level socialists (and to a lesser extent, democratic-socialists) appeared to be more active party campaigners. Fewer socialists failed to attend branch meetings in the previous twelve months. Around one-fifth of socialists and democratic-socialists attended most or every branch meeting. This pattern was also repeated in the number of hours engaged in party activities each month. Significantly more social-democrats spent no time at all involved in local party campaigning.

	Socialist	Democratic Socialist	Social Democrat
<i>Level of Activity</i>			
More active than 2 years ago	15.4	15.4	15.4
Less active	19.5	13.8	15.4
About the same	65.0	70.8	69.2
<i>Attendance at local meetings</i>			
Never during the last 12 months	56.4*	64.8	69.8
Rarely	13.5	8.5	11.6
Occasionally	11.3	4.2*	14.0
Most meetings	11.3	19.7**	4.7*
Every meeting	7.5**	2.8	0.0*
<i>Activism (hours/month)</i>			
None	56.5	50.7	65.1
Less than 5 hours	29.0	35.2	23.3
5 to 10 hours	6.9	8.5	9.3
10 to 15 hours	4.6*	1.4	0.0
More than 15 hours	3.1	4.2	2.3

Table 16: Subjective Factionalism – Local Membership Activism
(all figures are percentages)

As local representatives, there were few variations between the three ideological groups. Like the general party membership, around 20% of party members served as delegates to local constituency committees. But, the three groups differed in terms of committee attendance. Almost all socialists and democratic-socialist delegates attended most or every meeting, but around one-half of social-democrats recorded only occasional attendance. There were slight variations in activism at the national level. Democratic-socialists were marginally more likely than others to vote in NEC elections and to attend party conferences as delegates, although socialists reported slightly lower levels of turnout in the 1994 leadership election.

	Socialist	Democratic Socialist	Social Democrat
Local committee membership			
General committee – ever	22.0	22.5	20.9
General committee – current	5.1	12.7**	4.7
Executive Committee – ever	13.7	15.5	9.5
Local representation			
Labour local councillor – ever	7.6	9.9	7.0
Labour local councillor – current	2.9	4.2	2.3
Local committee attendance			
Never	0.0	10.0	0.0
Rarely	0.0	0.0	0.0
Occasionally	0.0	0.0	50.0
Most meetings	62.5	70.0	0.0*
Every meeting	37.5	20.0	50.0
National activism			
Conference delegate – ever	9.0	11.4	9.5
Voted in last NEC ballot	69.8	76.1	76.3
Voted in 1994 leadership elections	83.9	86.3	87.1

Table 17: Subjective Factionalism – Local and National Representation
(all figures are percentages)

	Socialist Active	Democratic Socialist Active	Social Democrat Active	Socialist Inactive	Democratic Socialist Inactive	Social Democrat Inactive
Boring	20.8	25.0	35.7	35.0	32.4	51.9*
Interesting	56.6	75.0	64.3	55.0	56.8	33.3**
Neither	22.6***	0.0**	0.0	10.0	10.8	14.8
Unfriendly	3.8*	12.5	14.3	8.5	11.1	12.0
Friendly	84.9	83.3	78.6	71.2	80.6	68.0
Neither	11.3	4.2	7.1	20.3	8.3	20.0
Divided	9.4	21.7*	8.3	20.7	20.0	28.0
United	60.4	56.5	58.3	53.4	40.0	48.0
Neither	30.2	21.7	33.3	25.9	40.0	24.0
Moderate	15.4*	30.4	30.8	22.8	25.7	28.0
Left-wing	38.5	30.4	46.2	50.9*	34.3	36.0
Neither	46.2	39.1	23.1	26.3	40.0	36.0
Irrelevant	20.0	16.7	15.4	28.3	40.0	36.0
Important	48.0	33.3	69.2*	48.3	42.9	36.0
Neither	32.0	50.0*	15.4*	23.3	17.1	28.0

Table 18: Subjective Factionalism – Views on Local Party Meetings by Level of Activism
(all figures are percentages)

The grassroots membership was also particularly distinctive in relation to active and passive forms of political participation. Over time, the trends in membership have shown an increasing propensity towards passive ‘armchair’ activities in place of more time-consuming forms of activist campaigning and canvassing. These trends were evident among the three subjective ideological groups. Relative to other party members, social-democrats reported substantially lower levels of activism on the doorstep. For instance, whereas around one-third of socialists and democratic-socialists canvassed voters

directly, only one-in-six social democrats did so. Significantly fewer social-democrats reported delivering election leaflets for the party.

There were also significant variations between the three ideological groups in terms of active participation in demonstrations and other forms of public protest. Whereas around one-half of democratic-socialists engaged in public protest, less than two-fifths of social-democrats had done so. Although all three subjective groups targeted the closure of local schools, socialists appeared to concentrate more heavily on educational policy than other party members. One-third of socialists demonstrated against cutbacks in local hospitals, but less than one-quarter of democratic-socialists and social-democrats prioritised this issue. As before, the general picture was one of an observably inactive group of social-democrat members who, relative at least to socialists and democratic-socialists, displayed considerably less willingness to engage in public protest.

	Socialist	Democratic Socialist	Social Democrat
<i>Activity</i>			
Canvassed voters on doorstep	28.7	32.4	16.3*
Signed petition supported by the Party	43.4	39.4	32.6
Canvassed voters by telephone	9.6	2.8*	9.3
Stood for office within Party	10.3	19.7**	4.7
Delivered Labour election leaflets	58.1	59.2	39.5**
Operation Victory volunteer	23.5*	16.9	11.6
Displayed election poster in window	75.7*	70.4	58.1**
Donated money to Labour funds	75.7	81.7	74.4
None	4.4	7.0	6.9
<i>Demonstration and Public Protest</i>			
Participated in demonstration – ever	44.8	52.1	39.5
Local schools	26.5	22.5	14.0
Local hospitals	14.7	12.7	9.3
Road building	3.7	7.0	4.7
Live animal exports	2.9	1.4	2.3
Blood-sports and hunting	1.5	1.4	0.0

Table 19: Subjective Factionalism – Membership Activism and Public Protest
(all figures are percentages)

In short, the grassroots membership of New Labour contained three general ideological factions as defined by members’ own ideological identity. Social demographics indicated that socialists were much more likely to be drawn from manual or unskilled populations, whereas democratic-socialists and social-democrats tended to be employed in professional occupations and possessed higher levels of educational attainment. The data also indicated that socialists held much longer continuous membership of the party than social-democrats. Many socialists became party members in the 1960s, 1970s and early-1980s, whereas up to one-half of all social-democrats joined Labour in the decade between its 1987 defeat and its 1997 victory. Among socialists and democratic-socialists

alike, the extent of rival memberships was low, yet among social-democrats it appeared relatively high. Although some socialists actively considered joining the Greens, a number of social-democrats became party members only after leaving either the SDP or Liberal Democrats.

However, it is across a number of key activism and ideology variables that we find notable differences between socialists and democratic-socialists on one hand, and social-democrats on the other. Socialists and democratic-socialists appeared relatively active grassroots members, reporting consistent levels of attendance at local meetings and regular engagement in constituency campaigning activities. Social-democrats were much less active by comparison. Many social-democrats reported infrequent attendance and, apart from their willingness to donate money, they emerged as much less enthusiastic participants in local campaigning. Across a range of ideological variables, we observed similar linear patterns where socialists occupied one ideological extreme and social-democrats the other. Whereas socialists and democratic-socialists were relatively radical, social-democrats appeared attitudinally more centrist. Furthermore, on several ideological dimensions, the observed differences between the three groups were significant enough to suggest that the reporting of members' own ideological identity continues to reflect the ways in which they position themselves towards central questions of public policy.

New Labour lacks many of the organisational characteristics necessary for a revival in structured intra-party dissent against the pre-eminence of parliamentary leadership. Nevertheless, the grassroots membership of New Labour continues to exhibit some of the key elements necessary for factionalised responses to internal party conflict. The Labour Membership Study revealed two fundamental types of 'new factionalism' inside Blair's New Labour party. First, the existence of an 'objective factionalism' where some grassroots party members simultaneously support a range of affiliated organisations and external pressure groups. Whereas groups like the Fabians and the Co-operative Society attracted older, active, working-class ideological moderates, the pressure groups like Amnesty and Greenpeace appealed to younger, inactive, middle-class radicals who increasingly found political solace in the issue politics of the new social movements outside the parliamentary arena.

The Membership Study also revealed 'subjective' forms of factionalism, where significant numbers of grassroots members continued to identify as 'socialists' or 'democratic socialists' despite the more overt 'social-democrat' positioning of their party. As the data revealed, there were a number of important differences between the various subjective 'factions'. Socialists tended to be older, working-class radicals who held party membership for long periods. Social-democrats were younger, middle-class moderates, many of whom joined Labour only after its 1992 defeat. Both suggested that New Labour continued to retain two of the essential characteristics of grassroots factionalism – the propensity of party members to find political comfort in groups outside parliamentary politics, and the maintenance of subjective ideological communities advancing divergent political agendas. Hence, the prevalence of 'new factionalism' inside New Labour suggested that *it remained possible* for attitudinal and behavioural dissent to continue to exist among grassroots members despite the lack of an organisational apparatus through which to influence, pressurise, and challenge the centralising tendencies of party leadership.

9

Conclusion

1997 was a critical year in British politics. Few moments in recent social and political history would equate with the events of May 1997. Save, of course, for the dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the downfall of Thatcher in 1990, the election of Nelson Mandela in 1994, or even the death of Diana, Blair's 'People's Princess', which interrupted the hot summer of Labour's honeymoon with the British electorate. These moments were all heart-stopping 'watersheds' of recent times, the effects of which changed our societies forever. The 1997 election was a 'critical watershed in British parliamentary politics'.¹ As Blair understood it, New Labour's victory ushered in a 'new era of politics'.² Or did it?

The 1997 vote was evidently a watershed election at the elite level. Labour secured a Commons majority of 179 seats on a 10% swing. Labour's share of the vote (43.2%) was the party's highest since 1966, but overall turnout (71.4%) was the lowest recorded since 1935. New Labour also successfully returned more women to Parliament (101) than any other party before it. Moreover, the election of a Labour government committed to an extensive programme of constitutional reform suggested that the domain of parliamentary politics was about to change forever. The remodelling of the House of Lords, the devolution of powers to regional assemblies, the revival of London's unitary authority, and proposals for electoral reform and proportional voting would unquestionably alter the blueprint of British politics for the 21st century.

The 1997 vote was less of a critical election among ordinary voters. The election was similar to previous elections given the continuing evidence of 'secular de-alignment' among the electorate. Class voting almost halved between 1964 and 1997.³ Regional

¹ Evans and Norris (1999), p.260

² Blair quoted in Cathcart (1997), p.170

³ Evans, Heath and Payne (1999), p.92. Class voting measured by UNIDIFF model. Parameter scores: 1964 (base 1.00), 1997 (0.59)

voting differentials between the two major parties were also much narrower, and the electoral cleavages generated by the 'old politics' of public v. private had increasingly yielded to new ideological dimensions (particularly European integration) which cut across established lines of voting behaviour. On closer reflection, Labour's landslide victory was much more vulnerable to attrition from long-term electoral processes than we would have otherwise expected from the ecstatic media headlines of 2nd May 1997. Contrary to Blair's narrow understanding of Labour's victory, it was clear that Britain's 'new era of politics' had not yet arrived.

Although the 1997 election did not meet the precise criteria of the 'critical elections thesis', it remained a poignant and defining moment in the internal life of the Labour Party. Blair's coronation as Prime Minister brought eighteen years of electoral and political isolation to an abrupt and enraptured conclusion. The key test facing the incoming Labour government was how best to deliver on the precepts and ideals cultivated by a decade of ideological transformation and renewal. New Labour also had to *stay* in government. The durability of government required long-term electoral visions, and further demanded the continued organisational pre-eminence of party leaders over grassroots members and activists. The lessons of the early-1980s taught a generation of party leaders that a factionalised and divided Labour Party would be an unelectable one. Although Labour's 1997 victory was not a 'critical election', it was a critical moment for the thousands of grassroots members and supporters who carried the party through its 'wilderness years' of opposition. Labour's exultation marked the conclusion of the most thorough and exhaustive reassessment of policy and structure undertaken by any major democratic political party in the modern age. Blair's victory also appeared to confine the organised factionalism and dissent, typified by groups of the Left in the 1970s and 1980s, to the annals of Labour history.

The principal intention of this Thesis has sought to examine the close relationships between party-level transformation and the decline of organised Labour Left factionalism between two significant historical watersheds – Labour's 1979 defeat and its landslide victory eighteen years later. As many strategists identified following the cataclysmic poll of 1983, Labour could not challenge the electoral supremacy of the Conservatives with a renewed ideological agenda as long as it maintained powerful, ideologically radical minorities of activists who encouraged factionalised responses to intra-party conflict. To

achieve ideological and electoral realignment, Labour first had to ensure the prevention of recurrent factionalism, notably on its left-wing margins. The revisionist strategy of successive party leaders of narrowing Labour's 'broad church' to deliver electoral realignment was heavily dependent on the eradication of organised factionalism and dissent. At first glance, therefore, the processes of party-level transformation and the decline of Labour Left factionalism appear to be strongly co-related.

In broad historical perspective there is strong evidence to reinforce claims that the decline of Labour Left factionalism was inextricably linked to, and affected by, the processes of modernisation occurring at the party-level in the same period. **Chapter 2** posited the existence of identifiable phases of party-level transformation and Labour Left (or group-level) decline following the 1983 defeat. The strength of association between them is quite striking. The deep and pervasive extent of Labour's 'triple crises' in the ideological, organisational and strategic arenas after 1979, appeared to be a function of the Left's occupation of alternative centres of power to parliamentary leadership. Once the vacuum of leadership was filled following Labour's 1983 defeat, the Left was exposed to relentless degeneration. Party leaders systematically expelled those most factionalist grassroots members, and learnt to further exploit the creeping fragmentation of the Labour Left following the 1981 Wembley conference and Benn-Healey contest. Under Kinnock, the party elite progressively wrestled key organisational powers away from grassroots activists and local parties, traditionally the stronghold of the Labour Left. At the national level, party leaders formulated strategic alliances with 'softer' left-wingers to embolden its agenda for ideological modernisation. But, the Left increasingly lacked both organisational solidity and a unifying sense of common ideological purpose. As Seyd observed in 1987, the Labour Left suffered from

“...a poverty of ideas...[It] will remain weak and divided until it clarifies its democratic socialist beliefs. It needs to re-establish an ideological core...that is relevant to the late twentieth-century.”⁴

It was no longer fashionable to be a 'lefty'. Worse still, a personal association with the Left had become an act of nefarious political treachery.

⁴ Seyd (1987), p.189

As the pace of transformation accelerated after Labour's third defeat in 1987, the groups of the Labour Left faced one of three likely outcomes – *expulsion, absorption or isolation*. A small number of groups advancing what party leaders regarded as questionable ideological goals, were liable for expulsion and repudiation. Between 1986 and 1992, hundreds of members supportive of Trotskyite groups like Militant or Socialist Organiser were routinely expelled. The 'soft-left' experienced the opposite effect. After 1985, the moderate Left groups slowly lost their ideological distinctiveness as their figureheads co-operated with party leaders in strategic coalitions designed to reinforce ideological and organisational change at the party-level. Many of the key players inside groups like Tribune or the Labour Co-ordinating Committee were absorbed into the echelons of the party élite and, by 1992, it was virtually impossible to demarcate them from the Labour leadership. Finally, the hard-left groups like the Campaign Group and CLPD were increasingly isolated and excluded from mainstream decision-making within the party. Both groups continued to portray Bennite demeanours as pessimistic opposition movements to Kinnock's revisionist leadership. Although the hard-left platform powerfully rejected the underlying philosophies behind the moderation of policy, the centralisation of power, and the downgrading of intra-party democracy, it appeared that to be an eloquent anti-moderniser in an era of unrelenting change was to concede the contest before it had even begun.

In the space of less than a decade, the Labour Left mutated from a powerful constituency of grassroots radicals capable of exerting remarkable leverage over the entire party, into a small, isolated and increasingly direction-less scattering of Labour traditionalists. Most of the extreme-left were completely exorcised from the party by the 1992 election, the hard-left became an isolated opposition movement with little substantive power-base outside Westminster, and the residue of an identifiable soft-left dissolved as its principal advocates enjoyed the fruits of leadership patronage. Under Smith and Blair, the small number of 'old Labour' traditionalists left behind (mostly either in Parliament or in the trade unions) asserted themselves only intermittently, usually in rather unimaginative attempts to block further reform to the structures and constitutional doctrines of the party. They had little realistic chance of success. The extent of transformation and the widespread clamour for electoral victory at all levels of the party enabled party leaders to disregard the forces of internal opposition with remarkable ease. The Labour Left could no longer galvanise reservoirs of activist opinion

against party transformation and modernisation. Left-wingers could neither organise effectively to mount a serious counter-attack to Blairism, nor could they agree on a set of unifying policies and tactics with which to do so. As New Labour collected the ultimate trophy, it was the Labour Left and ordinary party members who seemed to pay the highest price.

How and in what ways did party-level transformation hasten the decline and fragmentation of the Labour Left? There has been considerable academic attention afforded to the relationships between Labour's organisational and ideological transformation and its subsequent electoral victory. The same cannot be said of the striking effects of these reforms in accelerating the decline of left-wing factionalism. **Chapter 3** examined the important role played by party-level policy changes in recasting the ideological 'playing-field' on which the groups of the Labour Left organised and competed for grassroots support. The transformation of ideology and policy affected the Left in two significant ways.

First, the *breadth* of party-level ideological transformation after 1985 appeared to irrevocably settle many of the established lines of conflict between left-wing traditionalists and revisionist moderates. The sweeping modification of key facets of Labour's ideological orthodoxy, notably towards public ownership, market forces, European integration and nuclear disarmament, created new ideological settlements which routinely dismissed the priorities of the Left as irreconcilable with future electoral success. Many of these reversals in thinking were generated at the elite level through the formal Policy Review process that dominated the 1987-92 parliament. For instance, the Review discharged public ownership and nationalisation from Labour's macro-economic framework, first by suggesting the creation of socially-owned industries with a sizeable (but minority) stake for private capital, then by replacing commitments to re-nationalise privatised services with pledges to improve government regulation and consumer protection instead. Labour distanced itself from other central tenets of the Left's Alternative Economic Strategy, particularly regarding state-market relations. In accepting the primacy of market forces over all aspects of economic life, party leaders slowly disengaged from the state intervention sponsored by left-wing traditionalists in favour of looser conceptions of an 'enabling social-market' where government intervened only if the private sector was unable or unwilling to act.

The Policy Review also tempered Labour's policy towards defence and European integration. The long and proud tradition of unilateralism, favoured almost universally on the Left, was progressively downgraded, first by awarding added emphasis to modes of conventional defence, then by replacing unilateralism altogether with weaker multilateral alternatives. In the post-Cold War era, Labour no longer sought to take an international lead on nuclear defence, rather to coalesce with other nuclear powers to maintain the status quo and prevent further proliferation to authoritarian regimes abroad. Labour's policy shift on Europe was equally seismic. The party's 1983 manifesto commitment to withdraw from Europe was abandoned through the adoption of a range of 'constructive' European policies. These conveniently aligned the party much closer to the project of European integration, and at a time when the Conservatives were attempting to inculcate a dangerous revival of British national sentiment through its own brand of popular Euro-scepticism.

Although the Policy Review failed to generate the desired result – a Labour victory in 1992 – Kinnock's lasting legacy remained the 'birth' of New Labour. The Smith 'interregnum' furthered policy shift only in small number of uncontroversial areas (notably constitutional reform and social justice), choosing to concentrate on party organisational changes instead. Blair's New Labour was not altogether 'new' either. The post-1994 policy changes became rather uncomfortable accommodations between Kinnockite reforms and various vote-winning aspects of modern conservatism. Although the revision of Clause 4 and Labour's proposals for 'PPP' were logical extensions of an abandonment of public ownership, Blair went further by committing a future Labour government to Conservative spending limits for at least two years. Similarly, whereas some of Blair's social reforms were imaginative, New Labour regurgitated the accepted orthodoxy of the New Right of being 'tough on crime', while proposing to do little to reverse the most damaging consequences of Thatcherite education policy.

Hence, we should be extremely cautious in our usage of terms like 'New Labour' to describe an identifiably new political being. Blair's New Labour represented the most recent example of revisionist Labour leadership, albeit an extremely successful, electable and powerful one. The major repercussion for Labour traditionalists in the late-1990s was that as long as post-Kinnockite revisionism prevailed, they had little realistic hope of galvanising support for an alternative.

Party-level ideological transformation also affected the Labour Left in terms of the *depth* of its penetration among party members and ordinary Labour voters. As May's 'law of curvilinear disparity' highlighted, the existence of factionalism inside modern parties revealed important attitudinal differences between members and voters. Whereas grassroots members tend towards radical and divergent opinion-formation, party leaders and the mass of its voting public typically gravitate towards more centrist ideological positioning.

Time-series data from the BES surveys provided powerful evidence that the systematic review of Labour policy after 1983 *coincided* with the narrowing of member-voter attitudinal disparity. These trends were apparent across traditional left-right variables (nationalisation, trade union power) as well across other dimensions of policy (European integration, defence). Undeniably, the reduction of ideological disparity reflected the general leftwards shift of the electorate after 1987, and was further reinforced after 1994 by the influx of new 'cohorts' of party member committed to New Labour's victory. But, while the reduction of disparity vividly illustrated the wider historical decline of intra-party factionalism, it also implied that those who vote for the major parties at the turn of the 21st century may have become almost as 'radical' as those who join them as ordinary members.

The successful ideological re-positioning of party and membership denied to traditionalists one of the most vital structural elements necessary for factionalised responses to internal ideological conflict – the existence of large numbers of rank-and-file radicals. A revival of dissent not only required plausible ideological alternatives to New Labour around which to convene, but also demanded the successful reversal of deeply embedded ideological shifts among grassroots members and party voters. For the foreseeable future, these were likely to prove enduring obstacles for Old Labour to overcome.

What was the response of the various groups of the Labour Left to these extensive shifts in party ideology? To what extent was the decline of the Left a process exacerbated by its own fragmentary responses to ideological change at the party-level? **Chapter 4** considered these questions in light of the same dimensions of ideological transformation discussed above, and also measured group-level responses by differentiating between the

main ideological ‘types’ of Labour Left group – Tribune (for the soft-left), the Campaign Group (hard-left) and Militant Tendency (extreme-left).

The evidence of fragmentary group response was particularly suggestive. The ideological reply of Labour Left groups to policy moderation at the party-level was strongly associated with the ideological tradition of the individual groups themselves. The strength of group ideological conviction heavily pre-determined the nature of its response to party-level policy reform. Consequently, the highly ideological factions like Militant were significantly less likely to sanction group-level policy shifts than those moderate Labour Left groups like Tribune. Labour’s ideological transformation propagated *differential* responses at the group-level, and such variation implied important causal explanations for the trends in Labour Left fragmentation after 1983.

The ideological programme of the extreme-left Militant Tendency changed remarkably little between 1979 and 1997. Throughout, Militant retained strict adherence to two fundamental pillars of revolutionary-socialist thought. First, Militant continued to emphasise the need for ‘transitional’ policies to bridge the inevitable hiatus between the prevailing systems of global capitalism and eventual international socialism by workers’ revolution. Second, Militant systematically complied with the Trotskyite principle of entryism into mainstream social-democratic movements, at least until 1991. But, like other revolutionary movements, Militant’s programme was plagued by ideological reductionism.

The Tendency reduced all political issues to simple economics, and regularly attested that only *its* economic programme would avert global economic and industrial catastrophe. Militant’s programme was consistently dominated by five key economic pledges, and the primacy of economics ensured that Militant’s social programme remained rather undeveloped. For example, Militant broadened its outlook towards race relations only *after* the inner-city race riots of the early-1980s, and did so by targeting populist issues like police harassment rather than encouraging diversified programmes for the economic and social integration of communities. Militant’s bigoted denial of homosexuality as a ‘condition’ which would ‘disappear’ under true revolutionary socialism was replaced with more enlightened conceptions of gay rights, but only in light of the groundswell of antipathy to the introduction of Clause 28 and the Criminal Justice Act by the

Conservative government in 1988. Similarly, the 'greening' of Militant policy neatly coincided with the growth of popular environmentalism in the late-1980s and sought, rather ambitiously, to provide a class-based lead to the direct action sponsored by 'eco-warriors', animal rights activists, and other protest movements.

The hard-left Campaign Group responded to party-level ideological change in a slightly different way. Although the hard-left consistently rejected the thinking behind Labour's Policy Review, the Campaign Group nonetheless tempered its stance in several areas of policy. In effect, these changes represented the watering-down of obvious vote-losing aspects of the Left's established programme, whereas in other areas the group renewed a divergent ideological agenda. For example, rather than considering alternative forms of industrial ownership, the Campaign Group arbitrarily narrowed its sights to include only those services privatised by the Conservatives. Similarly, while the Campaign Group gradually disengaged from unilateralism and withdrawal following the 1987 election, it later re-radicalised its agenda after Labour's 1992 defeat by opposing Maastricht and demanding the reduction of government defence spending in light of the new security environment of the post-Cold War era.

The Tribune soft-left responded with extensive policy modifications, and the extent of Tribune's ideological shift helps us to understand why the parliamentary soft-left were systematically absorbed into the echelons of the party elite under Kinnock's leadership. The soft-left became vital components in the 'engine' of Labour's transformation. Following Tribune's relaunch in 1985, the soft-left routinely fortified most major aspects of policy reform, particularly in the field of economic and social affairs. Tribune publicly endorsed Labour's new orthodoxy of social ownership and market regulation to replace nationalisation and direct state intervention. Tribune also mirrored the temperance of Labour's defence and European policies by abandoning unilateralism and withdrawal in favour of multilateral alternatives and active participation in future European integration. But, these reassessments meant that by 1992 there were few substantive policy differences between the soft-left and party leaders. Tribune's celebrated ideological distinctiveness had almost totally evaporated.

Just as party-level transformation implied one of three likely scenarios for Labour Left groups – absorption into the elite, isolation, or exclusion – party-level policy changes also

encouraged three distinctive ideological responses at the group-level. The shape of the ideological 'playing-field' around which the Labour Left organised had been immeasurably altered. The fragmentary responses of Left groups to shifts in party policy and rhetoric revealed that it continued to lack a common ideological platform. More importantly, the maintenance of different ideological perspectives among the groups of Labour Left reinforced its own disintegration and decline.

The structural characteristics of party strongly influence the degree to which factional groupings at the sub-party level are free to mobilise opinion and command institutional power. As election strategists identified after Labour's 1983 defeat, the co-existence of organised left-wing factionalism and electoral isolation suggested that party leaders needed to reassert centralised control over party organisation to broaden Labour's electoral appeal and to sustain its project of ideological modernisation. **Chapter 5** considered the impact of organisational reforms in altering the prevailing balances of power inside the party and, thereby, denying to the groups of the Labour Left the organisational oxygen it needed to advance alternative ideological perspectives. This chapter suggested that Labour's recent structural reforms altered the organisational 'genus' of the party in two fundamental ways.

First, Labour's structural reforms precipitated a fundamental re-orientation in the *nature of party organisation*. By the mid-1990s, Labour ceased to be typical of the 'branch-mass' form of party identified by Duverger forty years before. Instead, Labour's modern organisational form closely resembled the types of party propounded by contemporary models founded on Downsian theory. Although the classic models advanced by Michels and Duverger posed a number of key considerations for early democratic parties, notably the power of office-holders and the representative structures of organisation (branch *v.* caucus), they regarded party organisations as rather static entities. Moreover, the classic models ignored many of the pressures on parties to adapt organisational form in light of changing patterns of party competition. The contemporary models of party developed by Panebianco, Katz and Mair sought to rectify these oversights, principally by emphasising the differential incentives for party-level reform and by acknowledging party organisation to be an evolving and transforming phenomenon.

Labour's organisational form may not resemble all the characteristics of contemporary models of party, but there is substantial evidence in support of their underlying claims. The centralisation of power and the employment of outside professionals after 1983 implied that Labour had begun to adopt some of the key traits of Panebianco's 'electoral-professional' model of party. Furthermore, the recent propensity of party leaders to consider alternative sources of funding and legitimisation, highlighted in Katz and Mair's model, pointed to an emergent trend of 'cartelisation' whereby parties abandon traditional resources and representative functions in favour of flexible and diversified methods of campaigning and communications. In short, the contemporary models revealed an important new phenomenon. Modern centre-left parties have experienced systematic pressure to depart from the branch-mass forms of structure typical of pre- and post-war generations, towards more contained, professional and centrally managed modes of electoral competition, internal governance and wider political legitimisation.

Second, Labour's organisational reforms involved significant alterations to the *nature of party membership*. Whereas Duverger's model revealed Labour to support an homogeneous mass-membership, collectively organised within local parties and trade unions, the centralisation of power after 1987 implied the gradual atomisation and collective disempowerment of grassroots membership. Party leaders assumed unrivalled control over most aspects of the internal life of the party, notably in the development and communication of party policy, and in the selection of candidates. Under these conditions the Labour Left could not survive. Organised factionalism and dissent demanded plurality between the various institutions of party organisation, such that decision-making remained decentralised rather than exclusively 'top-down'. Moreover, the Labour Left's established methods of political mobilisation required a variety of organisational arenas (typically branch parties and trade unions) within which to build rank-and-file support for their cause. The centralisation of power necessitated the degeneration of these same collective structures of membership on which the Left relied. Party-level organisational reforms rendered it structurally impossible for caucuses of party activists – irrespective of how representative of grassroots opinion they were – to use the vestiges of local or national party organisation to pre-determine policy and to select supportive candidates. By reasserting the autonomy of leadership and in undermining the collectivism of grassroots membership, New Labour engendered a form

of political organisation where the opportunities for the revival of organised Labour Left factionalism of the 1970s and 1980s appeared unrealisable.

The durability of factionalism is not exclusively dependent on the traits of organisation at the 'host' party-level. Factional groups organising inside modern parties are also distinctive political organisations in their own right, and by studying them as such we can better appreciate some of the historical trends in the party-faction relationship. **Chapter 6** reviewed the applicability of various models of factional organisation and stressed the importance of demarcating between different organisational 'types' of faction. Rather than reinforcing stereotypes of the Labour Left as being an homogenous organisational whole, we should instead acknowledge the existence of various groupings of activists, each of which supported markedly different structural characteristics. Rose's typology of factional organisation sought to classify apparent variations in sub-group structure. Rose identified three types of group operating within British political parties, and contrasted between the consciously organised and durable 'faction' from loose and transitory forms of organisation typical of 'tendencies' and 'ad-hoc issue groups'.

The Labour Left of the 1979-97 period contained the three types of sub-group propounded in Rose's model. The Militant Tendency was a particularly salient example of Rose's 'faction', especially since its organisational form remained highly structured and centralised throughout. Militant's leadership personnel enjoyed a remarkable stability of tenure and, as examined earlier, Militant adhered to a densely ideological platform irrespective of the sweeping moderation of policy occurring elsewhere. The soft-left Tribune Group served as a useful example of Rose's second type of sub-group – the 'tendency'. Compared to Militant, Tribune lacked organisational solidity, centralised leadership and strong ideological cohesion. Tribune acted as broad 'umbrella' movement designed to aggregate a range of left-wing political viewpoints among parliamentarians at the elite level, and Tribune worked almost exclusively within the parliamentary arena in order to influence the direction of Labour policy. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy typified Rose's 'ad-hoc issue group'. The CLPD targeted a narrow platform of intra-party democracy and membership rights. For a brief period, the group was well organised with a stable leadership personnel and caucuses of activist supporters. But, as Rose's model suggested, ad-hoc groups were temporary phenomena. The CLPD acquired ephemeral notoriety at a time of heightened intra-party conflict because of its

capacity to mobilise grassroots activists to shift the organisational balance of power at the party-level. The resolution of internal conflict and the exhaustion of much of the CLPD's manifesto exposed the group to decline, and it quickly found itself ensnared in the longer-term dissolution of the Labour Left.

Rose's typology suggested another important avenue of enquiry. If we can identify Rose's three types of sub-group operating inside the post-1979 Labour Left, then to what extent might we expect there to be historical trends between them? There is some evidence to suggest that, in the early-1980s, Left factionalism departed from loose tendencies and temporary ad-hoc groupings towards more structured types of 'faction'. The creeping fragmentation of the Labour Left meant that the Tribune 'tendency' and the 'ad-hoc' CLPD lost much of their political significance as grassroots activists looked beyond them to the more overtly ideological, publicly visible, and well-organised factions spearheaded by Militant and Socialist Organiser.

These trends in factional organisation rendered all three types of sub-group vulnerable to long-term attrition. For instance, the electoral repudiation of the Left's agenda in 1983 pressurised Tribune to realign its ideological platform closer to mainstream leadership thinking and, as such, caused its ranks to be infiltrated by pro-leadership moderates who used the soft-left to legitimise party modernisation. Similarly, the exhaustion of the CLPD's manifesto for intra-party democracy following the Wembley special conference in 1981 suggested that the group had little realistic chance of regaining influential positions inside the grassroots party. The unravelling of the Wembley reforms and the gradual reassertion of central party leadership after 1983 simply furthered the CLPD's decay. The Militant Tendency was equally vulnerable. Despite its popularity among some grassroots members in the early-1980s, the re-assertion of command leadership after the 1983 defeat afforded party leaders (and grassroots moderates) an unrivalled opportunity to forcibly expel persistent forces of dissent. Just as the looser forms of factional organisation rendered 'tendencies' like Tribune structurally vulnerable to elite absorption and infiltration, the visibility and growth of 'proto-party' groups like Militant merely reinforced concerted leadership action against organised grassroots dissent. Despite their different structural properties and the historical trends between them, Rose's three types of Labour Left group shared one common feature – none of them would survive the resurgence of centralised party leadership intact.

What is the prevalence of factionalism inside Blair's New Labour and are there observable tensions between older and newer cohorts of party member? Can subjective attitudinal factionalism continue to exist among grassroots members despite the relative lack of organisational structures at the party and group levels within which to coerce leaders and determine the direction of party policy? **Chapter 7** introduced data from original survey research among the grassroots party membership in Oxford and London. The Labour Membership Study aimed to provide valuable empirical data through which to examine whether New Labour's grassroots membership retained some of the traits of factionalism, both in terms of individual objective behaviour, and in members' subjective attitudes and political reasoning. The data revealed a number of interesting observations.

First, the survey identified important *local variations* in the socio-political attributes of grassroots members. Although there were few gender differences in the three constituencies, the data highlighted that Tottenham members were slightly younger, more ethnically diverse, and less likely to identify as middle-class. The Oxford memberships were similar in terms of gender profile, economic activity and union membership. The Oxford West party was slightly older and more professionalised, whereas the Oxford East membership included substantially more skilled non-manual workers. Given our knowledge of the social profiles of these constituencies, these demographic trends among members are not entirely unexpected.

There were also several key local variations in membership and rates of activism. Tottenham members were much more likely to be post-1994 recruits. Conversely, the Oxford East party contained a number of pre-1979 members who tended to regard themselves as 'Old Labour' loyalists. However, Oxford East members were relatively inactive grassroots campaigners, particularly when compared with their associates in inner-city Tottenham. Whereas London members reported higher levels of activism, Oxford East members attended branch meetings much less frequently and, as a result, fewer of their number served the local party as officers or delegates.

The second important observation identified by the Study concerned the existence of variations between *pre- and post-1994 membership cohorts* – what we may term the Old Labour-New Labour dimension. Whiteley and Seyd suggested a number of important distinctions between these two cohorts. There were also some similarities. The media

stereotype of New Labour members as ‘upwardly mobile yuppies’ does not have much validity. Both studies reported only slight variations in social class between the two groups. The data also revealed little difference in educational background, although it is estimated that New Labour members are around five years younger on average.

Whiteley and Seyd further observed that New Labour recruits were relatively inactive grassroots members. The Oxford and Tottenham study identified similar trends. Old Labour members were much more likely to attend branch meetings or to serve as officers, councillors and conference delegates. But, significant numbers of pre-1994 members also reported that they had become less active (or stayed the same) compared to two years before. This trend may point to a creeping disillusionment among grassroots Old Labour. Whiteley and Seyd’s observation of important attitudinal differences between Old and New Labour members was also apparent in the Oxford and Tottenham sample. While there were some attitudinal similarities between them, especially on issues like electoral reform, gay rights and European integration, Old Labour members tended to more strongly identify with traditional Labour Left issues like public ownership, redistribution, strong trade unions, and intra-party democracy.

Is it possible for factionalism to survive at the grassroots level within a political party where parliamentary leaders systematically prevent the collective organisation of dissent through factions, tendencies and other internal sub-groups? **Chapter 8** examined the prevalence of subjective (attitudinal) and objective (behavioural) forms of factionalism within New Labour’s membership. The data revealed a number of interesting characteristics of grassroots dissent among the membership of Blair’s New Labour.

Firstly, the rise of New Labour was accompanied by the growth of new forms of *objective behavioural factionalism*, markedly different to the dissent excited by the groups of the Labour Left in the 1970s and 1980s. Behavioural factionalism is strongly associated with individuals’ reported membership of groups and organisations, and hence cluster analysis techniques were particularly useful in differentiating between clusters of party members who displayed similar patterns of factional behaviour. The cluster solution revealed two types of ‘objective factionalism’ within grassroots New Labour. One cluster subscribed to the established centre-left affiliated societies like the Fabians or Co-operative societies, whereas the second cluster aligned themselves with popular environmental and social

rights pressure groups like Amnesty, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, CND and Charter 88.

The membership data highlighted important differences between the two clusters. The centre-left groups attracted older and longer-standing party members, typically male workers employed in non-professional occupations. Conversely, pressure groups enticed more middle-class professional women who held party membership for shorter periods of time. These two clusters were also particularly distinctive in terms of political activism and ideological orientation. Whereas centre-left group supporters devoted more time to regular party activities, pressure group supporters were noticeably less assiduous. Fabian/Co-op supporters were also more attitudinally 'moderate' relative to pressure group members. Across most policy dimensions, the supporters of environmental and social groups tended to hold the most overtly radical positions. Not only would these trends reinforce our earlier understanding of disaggregation between political activism and attitudinal radicalism but, crucially, they also point to the growth of new kinds of behavioural factionalism. In short, the objective forms of individual dissent inside Blair's grassroots party appear to be represented either by active, working-class, ideologically moderate centre-leftists, or by inactive, middle class radicals who have found comfort in the valence issue politics of the major pressure groups operating outside the Labour movement.

We can also measure the predisposition of individual party members towards factional behaviour through *subjective ideological identity*, particularly by reporting ideological self-perception and the extent to which grassroots members maintain an outdated ideological vernacular. Although the Labour elite evidently travelled towards a more open 'social-democratic' ideological positioning after 1992, two-thirds of party members continued to describe themselves either as 'socialists' or 'democratic-socialists'. This suggested that significant numbers of party members did not subjectively align themselves with the current of New Labour ideology. Moreover, it implied that that subjective ideological identity might constitute a fresh dimension of dissent inside New Labour.

There were a number of important differences between the three subjective ideological groups. Whereas social-democrats and democratic-socialists were typically drawn from professional and educated populations, socialists were much more likely to be employed

in manual or unskilled occupations. Socialists were also slightly older on average and, consequentially, they held longer continuous party membership. Most socialists were recruited during the 1960s and 1970s, whereas many social-democrat identifiers held less than five years continuous membership. Some social-democrats joined Labour only after resigning from the SDP or Liberal Democrats. There were also important variations in activism between the three subjective groups. Socialists were relatively active members, attending local meetings on a regular basis and participating in local campaigning. Social-democrats were much less enthusiastic, preferring to donate money to Labour's election funds as 'armchair activists' rather than engaging in local politics and doorstep campaigning.

The data further revealed strong relationships between ideological self-identity and attitudinal preference. Knowing whether an individual member identifies as a socialist or social-democrat can assist us in the prediction of individual policy preference. Socialists were twice as likely as social-democrats to support an extension of public ownership, party democracy, the retention of fundamental principles and the continuing saliency of the class struggle. Democratic-socialists were also attitudinally radical, especially towards tax and redistribution, healthcare and gay rights. Unsurprisingly, social-democrats were twice as likely as socialists to prefer New Labour's version of Clause 4 to the original constitutional statement of 1918.

Thus, the membership survey highlighted the existence of two distinct factional phenomena. First, that a significant number of party members were attracted towards a range of affiliated and external pressure groups, some of which advanced divergent policy options to New Labour thinking. Second, that many party members regarded themselves ideologically in a way markedly different to that anticipated by the New Labour leadership. The existence of both proffered an important conclusion that, despite the systematic prevention of organised dissent against Labour's parliamentary leaders, the grassroots membership of New Labour continued to maintain some of the key aspects of behavioural and attitudinal factionalism. At the individual level at least, it remained possible for traits of grassroots factionalism and dissent to survive the resurgence of centralised party leadership.

The membership data is one of the most important research contributions of this Thesis. Although the size of the sample was heavily constrained by economic factors, the survey data complemented larger empirical studies of grassroots party memberships undertaken by Seyd and Whiteley (1990, 1992, 1998). The Study also furthered evidence from successive BES studies regarding the 'factionalisation' and 'homogeneity' of British parties (see Heath et. al., 1994; Evans and Norris, 1999).

The Thesis made a further empirical contribution by adapting the BES data to test the assumption that attitudinal preferences in modern parties are subjected to 'curvilinear disparity', such that grassroots activists subscribe to substantively radical opinions relative to party voters and leadership élites (May, 1973). By re-modelling the BES time-series data, there was strong evidence to suggest that, by the mid-1990s, the attitudinal positioning of party members had moved much closer to that of ordinary mainstream Labour voters. These trends over time underscored some of the causal determinants of New Labour's landslide victory in May 1997. They also reinforced claims that those who vote for political parties in the contemporary age may have become as radical as those who join them as party members (Webb and Farrell, 1999). More importantly, the data highlighted that Labour's ideological transformation had a remarkably deep and penetrating effect on the structuring of attitudes inside the grassroots party and, as a result, severely circumscribed the ability of activist-radicals to galvanise opinion in favour of alternative ideological perspectives.

Another significant finding of this research has postulated that the form of Labour Left factionalism in the post-1979 era reinforced various key tenets of modern faction theory. For example, the history of recurrent battles between party leaders and the Militant Tendency during the early 1980s lent substantial weight to Allan Sindler's suggestion that bi-factional rivalry in a single political unit often approximates a two-party system in itself. Moreover, the models of faction developed by Rose and Zariski held particular validity since the groups of the Labour Left maintained different forms of factional structure, organised within various factional systems inside and outside the parliamentary arena, and their adherents displayed distinctive patterns of cognitive reasoning and ideological coherence. The importance attached by Duverger and Nyomarky to the role of systemic political factors in understanding intra-party factionalism, was also significant in our study of the Labour Left. The growth of organised Labour Left factionalism was

strongly correlated with the inefficiencies of party leadership, both in exerting discipline over the grassroots party and in maintaining Labour's political legitimacy inside the political system as a whole. Once the project of transformation and modernisation began to rectify these inefficiencies, the Left was exposed to persistent degeneration.

This Thesis has also sought to redress the lack of contemporary academic investigation into factions as distinctive political units. Researchers can draw upon an extensive literature examining all aspects of party-level transformation: ideological, organisational and strategic (Taylor, 1997; Jones, 1996; Shaw, 1994; Heffernan and Marqusee, 1992; Seyd and Whiteley, 1992; Smith and Spear, 1992; Hughes and Wintour, 1990). But there has been little substantive work committed to the study of internal governance and factional groupings within modern British parties aside from those keynote studies undertaken, for example, by Panitch and Leys (1996), Shaw (1988), Seyd (1987), Callaghan (1984), Whiteley (1983), and Kogan and Kogan (1981). Moreover, some historical analyses of the Labour Left are not directly relevant to the post-1979 period (Twitchell, 1998; Warde, 1982; McCormick, 1979; Pimlott, 1977; Widgery, 1976). Others suffer from extensive political bias and are noteworthy for their lack of impartiality (Taaffe, 1995; Shipley, 1983; Baker, 1981).

Finally, this Thesis has focused on the importance of understanding the dynamics of modern Labour Left factionalism as occurring through the interplay between organisational *and* ideological factors at both the party *and* group levels. Many of the fundamental principles underlying Labour's ideological and organisational transformation were predicated (and reliant) upon the absence of structured left-wing dissent. The systematic abandonment of Labour's socialist-collectivist ideals, and its transformation into a 'catch-all' party with an individually empowered yet de-radicalised grassroots membership, impacted directly on the Left's ability to defend traditional ideological principles as an alternative centre of legitimacy to revisionist leaders. Furthermore, the lack of common ideological purpose and the maintenance of different forms of factional organisation meant that the response of the Labour Left to party-level transformation would invariably be a diffuse, divided and strategically ineffective one.

We should not under-estimate the resurgent capabilities of grassroots members to exert pressure on Labour's parliamentary leadership. New Labour's grassroots membership has

retained many of the essential behavioural and attitudinal traits necessary for a revival in membership dissent. New Labour has also encouraged new types of grassroots factionalism. Party members continue to actively engage in affiliation with a variety of other campaigning organisations. Moreover, the structuring of members' political beliefs suggests that individual attitudinal factionalism may have survived within a transformed party where the structural opportunities for the expression of collective dissent are routinely denied. The Labour Left factionalism of the early-1980s may be extinct, but we should not preclude the emergence of new dimensions of grassroots conflict at some point in the future.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Genealogy of the British Left

Appendix 2 Membership of the Tribune Group of Labour MPs 1980-90

Appendix 3 Labour Membership Study – Questionnaire

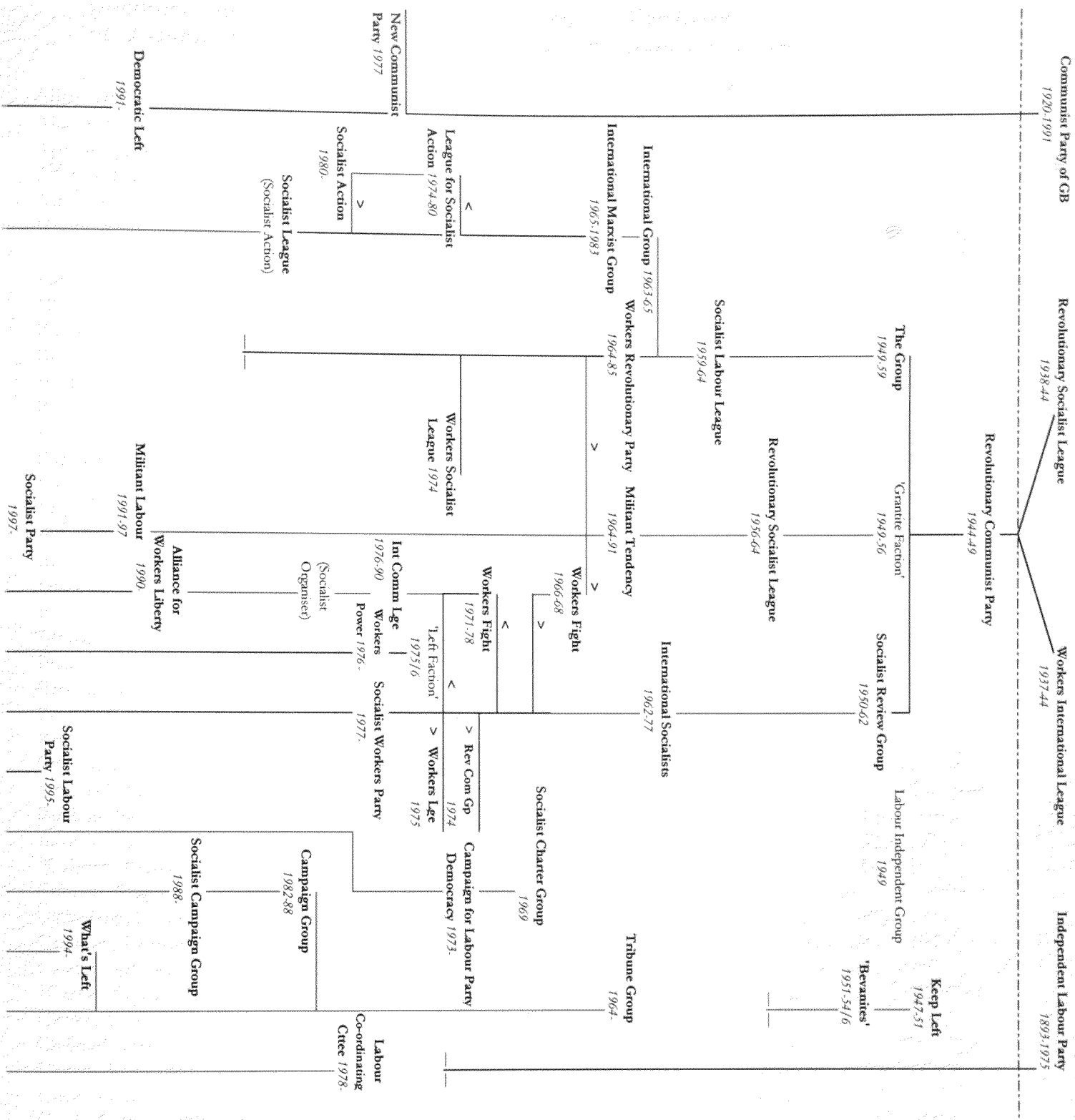
Appendix 4 Labour Membership Study – Response and Non-Response

Appendix 5 Labour Membership Study – Frequency Table of Group Membership

Appendix 6 Labour Membership Study – Results of Continuous Cluster Analysis of Group Membership (four-cluster solution)

Appendix 1

Genealogy of the Postwar British Left 1938-97



Groups inside the Labour Party

Groups outside the Labour Party

Appendix 2

Members of the Tribune Group of Labour MPs 1980-1990

[Membership lists from the annual 'Greetings to Conference' from the Tribune Group of Labour MPs, published in *Tribune*. Reproduced overleaf with permission]

Allan, Graham (1987-1990)	Flannery, Martin (1980-1983)	Mikardo, Ian (1980-1983)
Allaun, Frank (1980-1984)	Fletcher, Ted (1980-1983)	Michael, Alun (1989-1990+)
Armstrong, Hillary (1987-1990+)	Flynn, Paul (1987-1990+)	Michie, Bill (1984-1990+)
Ashton, Joe (1980-1984)	Foot, Michael (1980-1990+)	Miller, Maurice (1980-1987)
Atkinson, Norman (1980-1987)	*Ford, Glyn (1985-1990+)	^Molloy, Bill (1983-1990)
*Balfé, Richard (1984-1990)	Foster, Derek (1985-1990+)	Moonie, Lewis (1987-1988)
Barnett, Guy (1980-1987)	Foulkes, George (1985-1990)	Morgan, Rhodri (1987-1990+)
Barron, Kevin (1984-1985)	Fraser, John (1980-1990+)	Morley, Elliot (1987-1990)
*Barton, Roger (1990+)	Freeson, Reg (1983-1985)	*Morris, Dave (1987-1990+)
Battle, John (1987-1990+)	Fyfe, Maria (1987-1990+)	Mowlam, Mo (1987-1990+)
Benn, Tony (1981-1983)	Galbraith, Sam (1988-1990+)	Murphy, Paul (1987-1990+)
Beckett, Margaret (1984-1990+)	Galloway, George (1987-1989)	Newens, Stan (1980-1984)
Bennett, Andrew (1980-1983)	Garrett, John (1980-1984)	O'Neill, Martin (1980-1990+)
Birmingham, Gerry (1984-1990+)	Godman, Norman (1984-1989)	*Oddy, Christine (1990+)
Bidwell, Sydney (1980-1990+)	Gould, Byan (1984-1990+)	Orme, Stan (1980-1990+)
Blair, Tony (1987-1990+)	Griffiths, Nigel (1987-1990+)	Parry, Bob (1980-1983)
Blunkett, David (1987-1990+)	Harman, Harriet (1983-1990+)	Patchett, Terry (1985-1989)
Boeteng, Paul (1987-1990)	*Harrison, Lyndon (1990+)	Pendry, Tom (1990+)
Booth, Albert (1980-1984)	Hart, Judith (1980-1983)	Pike, Peter (1984-1990+)
*Bowe, David (1990+)	Heffer, Eric (1980-1987)	*Pollack, Anita (1990+)
Boyes, Roland (1984-1990+)	Henderson, Doug (1987-1990+)	Prescott, John (1980-1990+)
Bradley, Keith (1987-1990+)	Hinchcliffe, David (1987-1990+)	Race, Reg (1980-1983)
Bray, Jeremy (1984-1990+)	Holland, Stuart (1980-1989)	*Read, Mel (1990+)
Brown, Gordon (1984-1990+)	*Hoon, Geoff (1986-1990+)	Reid, John (1987-1989)
Brown, Nick (1986-1990+)	Howarth, George (1987-1990+)	Richardson, Jo (1980-1983)
Brown, Ron (1981-1983)	Hoyle, Doug (1981-1990+)	Roberts, Alan (1980-1990)
^Bruce, Donald (1983-1990)	Huckfield, Leslie (1980-1983)	Roberts, Ernie (1980-1984)
*Buchan, Janey (1981-1990+)	Hughes, Bob (1980-1990+)	Roberts, Gwilym (1980-1984)
Buchan, Norman (1980-1990+)	*Hughes, Stephen (1986-1989)	Rogers, Allan (1984-1990)
Barnes, Harry (1988-1989)	Hughes, Sean (1987-1990)	Rooker, Jeff (1980-1989)
*Caborn, Richard (1982-1983)	Ingram, Adam (1987-1990+)	Ross, Ernie (1980-1983)
Caborn, Richard (1983-1990+)	Jones, Alec (1980-1983)	Ruddock, Joan (1987-1990+)
Callaghan, James (1980-1984)	Kerr, Russ (1980-1984)	*Seal, Barry (1985-1990+)
Canavan, Dennis (1980-1983)	Kilroy-Silk, Robert (1980-1984)	Short, Clare (1984-1990+)
Carmichael, Neil (1980-1984)	Kinnock, Neil (1980-1990+)	Silkin, John (1980-1987)
*Castle, Barbara (1985-1990)	Lamond, James (1980-1982)	Silverman, Julius (1980-1984)
Clarke, Tom (1987-1990+)	Leighton, Ron (1980-1990+)	*Simpson, Brian (1990+)
Clelland, Dave (1987-1990+)	Lester, Joan (1983-1984)	Skinner, Dennis (1980-1983)
Clwyd, Ann (1985-1990+)	Lewis, Terry (1984-1989)	Smith, Chris (1984-1990+)
Cook, Frank (1984-1985)	Litherland, Bob (1981-1983)	*Smith, Llew (1987-1990+)
Cook, Robin (1980-1990+)	Livingstone, Ken (1987-1989)	Snape, Peter (1980-1990+)
Cousins, Jim (1987-1990+)	Lloyd, Tony (1985-1990)	Soley, Clive (1980-1990+)
*Crawley, Christine (1985-1990+)	MacDonald, Calum (1987-1990+)	Steinberg, Gerry (1987-1990)
Cryer, Bob (1980-1983)	McAllion, John (1987-1990+)	Strang, Gavin (1982-1990+)
Darling, Alistair (1987-1990+)	McCartney, Ian (1987-1990+)	Straw, Jack (1980-1990+)
*David, Wayne (1989-1990+)	McDonald, Oonagh (1980-1985)	Thorne, Stan (1980-1987)
Davies, Ron (1984-1990+)	*McGowan, Michael (1987-1989)	Tilley, John (1980-1983)
Davidson, Arthur (1980-1984)	McLeish, Henry (1987-1990+)	*Titley, Gary (1990+)
Dobson, Frank (1985-1990+)	McKelvey, William (1980-1983)	*Tongue, Carol (1986-1990+)
*Donnelly, Alan (1990+)	*McMahon, Hugh (1985-1990+)	Turner, Dennis (1987-1990+)
Doran, Frank (1989-1990+)	McNamara, Kevin (1980-1985)	Vaz, Keith (1988-1990+)
Dubs, Alf (1981-1987)	McTaggart, Bob (1981-1983)	Walley, Joan (1987-1990+)
Dunnachie, James (1987-1990)	McWilliam, John (1987-1990+)	Wareing, Bob (1984-1990+)
Eastham, Ken (1980-1989)	Madden, Max (1984-1986)	Watson, Mike (1990+)
Edwards, Bob (1980-1987)	Marshall, Jim (1980-1984)	Williams, Alan (1987-1990+)
Ellis, Ray (1980-1981)	*Martin, David (1985-1990+)	Wilson, William (1980-1984)
*Elliott, Michael (1985-1990+)	Martlew, Eric (1987-1990+)	Winnick, David (1980-1990+)
Evans, John (1987-1990+)	Maxton, John (1980-1990+)	Wise, Audrey (1987-1989)
Evans, Ioan (1980-1985)	Maynard, Joan (1980-1983)	Worthington, Tony (1987-1990+)
Fatchett, Derek (1987-1990+)	Meacher, Michael (1980-1990+)	Wright, Sheila (1980-1984)
Field, Frank (1980-1982)	Meale, Alan (1987-1989)	
Fisher, Mark (1984-1990+)	*Megahy, Tom (1986-1990+)	

*** Labour MEP ^ Labour Peer**

THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS

(Lancashire Area)

sends fraternal greetings
to all delegates and visitors
to the Labour Party Conference

It is vitally necessary that all sections of the Labour Party work together to keep this party and Movement intact ready to elect a Labour Government at the next General Election.

E. P. DONAGHY
President

J. LORD
Vice-President

S. G. VINCENT
General Secretary

On the occasion of the
79th Annual Conference

The Executive Council of the

AMALGAMATED UNION OF ENGINEERING WORKERS FOUNDRY SECTION

express solidarity with workers
throughout the world

R. GARLAND
General Secretary

G. HOWIESON
President

**MERSEYSIDE TRADE UNIONISTS &
RETIRED MEMBERS UNION**
a broad based TGWU No 6 Region for all OAPs
*Greetings to all delegates at the Blackpool Labour
Party Conference*

A lifetime of campaigning proves CONCLUSIVELY
Let us face the future and the stark facts
Active Labour workers and labour voters NEED:

1. Reselection 2. Implementation 3. Accountability
for ALL LABOUR MPs

Hon Chairman
Cllr Alex Doswell

Hon Secretary
Bill Donaghy

*Greetings
from
the Editor and Staff of*
**SOVIET
WEEKLY**

IRON AND STEEL TRADES CONFEDERATION
Midlands Area

Fraternal Greetings Corby Steelworkers

National Executive
John Cowling
Peter Floody

Bill Homewood, MP

Joint Committee Sec
Mick Skelton

NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS

DERBYSHIRE AREA

1880-1980

*Fraternal Greetings in this our
Centenary Year*

We will continue to:

**FIGHT FOR THE RETURN OF A
LABOUR GOVERNMENT COMMIT-
TED TO SOCIALIST POLICIES:**

**FIGHT AGAINST A REACTIONARY
TORY GOVERNMENT WHOSE AIMS
ARE A RETURN TO THE 1930s**

P. E. Heathfield Area Secretary
H. W. Dilks Area Compensation Agent
G. Butler Area Treasurer

LABOUR CAMPAIGN FOR GAY RIGHTS

Calls for support for the motion on homosexuals Meeting
Princess Suite, Park House Hotel, 308 North Promenade
Blackpool, Wednesday 1st October, 5.30 pm

L.C.G.R., 1 Westbourne Avenue, London, W3 6JL

GREETINGS TO THE LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE from the

TRIBUNE GROUP OF LABOUR MPs

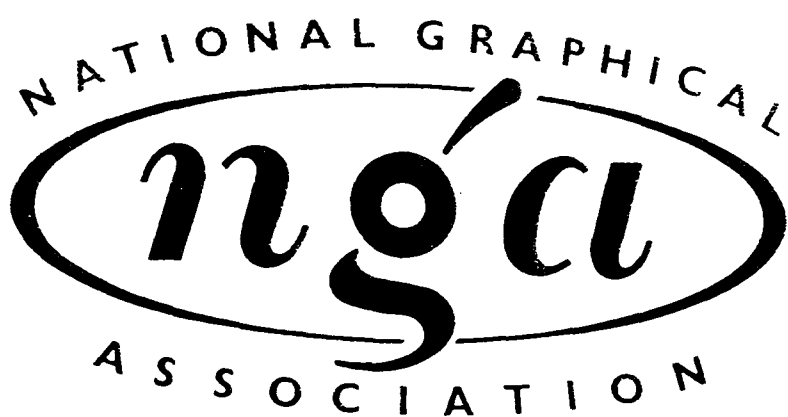
Frank Allaun MP
Joe Ashton MP
Norman Atkinson MP
Guy Barnett MP
Andrew Bennett MP
Sydney Bidwell MP
Albert Booth MP
Norman Buchan MP
James Callaghan MP
(Middleton)
Denis Canavan MP
Neil Carmichael MP
Robin F Cook MP
Bob Cryer MP

Arthur Davidson MP
Ken Easton MP
Bob Edwards MP
Ray Ellis MP
Ioan Evans MP
Frank Field MP
Martin Flannery MP
Ted Fletcher MP
Michael Foot MP
John Fraser MP
John Garrett MP
Judith Hart MP
Eric Heffer MP
Stuart Holland MP

Leslie Huckfield MP
Robert Hughes MP
Alec Jones MP
Russell Kerr MP
Robert Kilroy-Silk MP
Neil Kinnock MP
James Lamond MP
Ron Leighton MP
Oonagh McDonald MP
William McKelvey MP
Kevin McNamara MP
Jim Marshall MP
John Maxton MP
Joan Maynard MP

Michael Meacher MP
Ian Mikardo MP
Maurice Miller MP
Stan Newens MP
Martin O'Neill MP
Stan Orme MP
Bob Parry MP
John Prescott MP
Reg Race MP
Jo Richardson MP
Allan Roberts MP
Ernie Roberts MP
Gwilym Roberts MP

Jeff Rooker MP
Ernie Ross MP
John Silkin MP
Julius Silverman MP
Dennis Skinner MP
Peter Snape MP
Clive Soley MP
Jack Straw MP
Stan Thorne MP
John Tilley MP
William Wilson MP
David Winnick MP
Sheila Wright MP



The National Graphical
Association

*sends greetings to
all delegates to the
1990 Labour Party
Conference*

Tony Dubbins Bryn Griffiths
General Secretary General President

63/67 Bromham Road, Bedford

NATIONAL
COMMUNICATIONS
UNION



The NCU is totally
committed to Social
Ownership for British
Telecom. We call for
democratic control of
the industry by
consumers, workers
and management

TONY YOUNG, *General Secretary*

BILL FRY, *President, Engineering Group*

GREETINGS TO THE 1990 LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE FROM THE TRIBUNE GROUP OF LABOUR MPs

Hilary Armstrong

Kevin Barron
Roger Barton
John Battle
Margaret Beckett
Andrew Bennett
Gerry Bermingham
Syd Bidwell
Tony Blair
David Blunkett
David Bowe
Roland Boyes
Keith Bradley
Jeremy Bray
Gordon Brown
Nick Brown
Janey Buchan
Norman Buchan

Richard Caborn
Tom Clarke
Dave Clelland
Ann Clwyd
Robin Cook

Jim Cousins
Christine Crawley

Alistair Darling
Wayne David
Ron Davies
Frank Dobson
Alan Donnelly
Frank Doran

Michael Elliott
John Evans

Derek Fatchett
Mark Fisher
Martin Flannery
Paul Flynn
Michael Foot
Glyn Ford
Derek Foster
John Fraser
Maria Fyfe

Sam Galbraith
John Garrett
Bryan Gould
Nigel Griffiths

Harriet Harman
Lyndon Harrison
Doug Henderson
David Hinchcliffe
Geoff Hoon
George Howarth
Doug Hoyle
Bob Hughes
Stephen Hughes

Adam Ingram
Neil Kinnock
Ron Leighton
Joan Lester
John McAllion
Ian McCartney
Calum MacDonald
Michael McGowan
Henry McLeish
Hugh McMahon
Kevin McNamara
John McWilliam
David Martin
Eric Martlew
Tom Megahy

Bill Michie
John Maxton
Michael Meacher
Alun Michael
Rhodri Morgan
David Morris
Marjorie Mowlam
Paul Murphy

Stan Newens

Christine Oddy
Martin O'Neill
Stan Orme

Tom Pendry
Peter Pike
Anita Poilack
John Prescott

Mel Read
Jo Richardson
Ernie Ross
Joan Ruddock

Barry Seal
Clare Short
Brian Simpson
Chris Smith
Llew Smith
Peter Snape
Clive Soley
Gavin Strang
Jack Straw

Gary Tittley
Carole Tongue
Dennis Turner

Keith Vaz

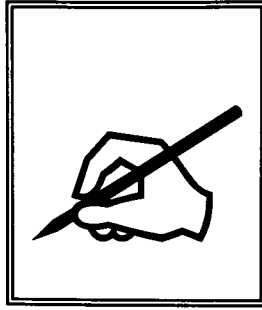
Joan Walley
Bob Wareing
Alan W. Williams
David Winnick
Tony Worthington
Mike Watson

Appendix 3

Labour Membership Study – Questionnaire

SABLE Research

- STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS OF THE LABOUR ELECTORATE -



LABOUR MEMBERSHIP STUDY



ALL ANSWERS GIVEN ARE FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY AND WILL REMAIN STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. SOME OF THE QUESTIONS ARE ASKED IN ORDER THAT WE CAN OBTAIN A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE LABOUR PARTY.

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE BY INSERTING A ✓ IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX OR BY WRITING YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED

AFTER COMPLETION PLEASE RETURN IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED TO

<p>ROSS YOUNG LABOUR MEMBERSHIP STUDY <u>FREEPOST</u> BRASENOSE COLLEGE OXFORD OX1 4YZ</p>
--

1.
In what year did you first join The Labour Party?
PLEASE WRITE IN YEAR
2.
Are you currently a paid-up member of the Party?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

Yes
☐¹

No
☐²
3.
Have you been a member continuously since the year you joined?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

Yes
☐¹

No
☐²
4.
What annual membership subscription do you pay to the Party?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

Standard (£16)
☐¹

Reduced (£5)
☐²

Registered (£5)
☐³

Youth (£1)
☐⁴
5.
Would you say that you are more active within the Labour Party NOW as compared to TWO YEARS ago, less active, or about the same?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

More active
☐¹

Less active
☐²

About the same
☐³

Not a member 2 years ago
☐⁰
6.
Thinking back over the last TWELVE MONTHS, how often have you attended a Labour Party branch meeting?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

Every meeting
☐⁵

Most meetings
☐⁴

Occasionally
☐³

Rarely
☐²

Never
☐¹

PLEASE ANSWER ONE OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS. IF YOU HAVE ATTENDED A MEETING DURING THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS, PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 7a. IF YOU HAVE NOT ATTENDED A MEETING DURING THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS, PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 7b. THEN PROCEED TO QUESTION 8a.

- 7a.
From your own experience are local Labour Party meetings...
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION ONLY FOR EACH DESCRIPTION AND GO TO QUESTION 8a

VERY

FAIRLY

NEITHER

FAIRLY

VERY

(i) Interesting

(ii) Friendly

(iii) United

(iv) Left-wing

(v) Important

☐

⁵

☐

⁴

☐

³

☐

²

☐

¹

Boring

Unfriendly

Divided

Moderate

Irrelevant
- 7b.
From what you imagine, or from what you have been told by others, do you think local Labour Party meetings are...
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION ONLY FOR EACH DESCRIPTION AND GO TO QUESTION 8a

VERY

FAIRLY

NEITHER

FAIRLY

VERY

(i) Interesting

(ii) Friendly

(iii) United

(iv) Left-wing

(v) Important

☐

⁵

☐

⁴

☐

³

☐

²

☐

¹

Boring

Unfriendly

Divided

Moderate

Irrelevant

- 8a. Have you ever been a delegate to the Constituency General Committee?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION
- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ | Go to Q. 8b |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> ² | Go to Q. 9 |
- 8b. If "Yes", are you currently a delegate?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION
- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ | Go to Q. 8c |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> ² | Go to Q. 9 |
- 8c. If "Yes", how often do you attend a General Committee meeting?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION
- | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| Every meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁵ |
| Most meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁴ |
| Occasionally | <input type="checkbox"/> ³ |
| Rarely | <input type="checkbox"/> ² |
| Never | <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ |
9. Have you ever been, a member of the General Committee's Executive Committee?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION
- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> ² |
10. How much time do you devote to Party activities in an average month?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION
- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| None | <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ |
| Less than 5 hours | <input type="checkbox"/> ² |
| 5 to 10 hours | <input type="checkbox"/> ³ |
| 10 to 15 hours | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁴ |
| 15 hours or more | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁵ |
- 11a. Have you ever served as a Labour local or county councillor?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION
- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ | Go to Q. 11b |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> ² | Go to Q. 12 |
- 11b. If "Yes", are you CURRENTLY serving as a councillor?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION
- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> ² |
12. Since the 1992 election which, if any, of the following political activities have you taken part in?
PLEASE TICK AS MANY OPTIONS AS APPROPRIATE
- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Canvassed voters on behalf of the Labour Party by visiting their homes | <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ | Signed a petition supported by the Labour Party | <input type="checkbox"/> ² |
| Canvassed voters on behalf of the Labour Party by telephone | <input type="checkbox"/> ³ | Stood for office within the Labour Party | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁴ |
| Delivered Labour election leaflets | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁵ | Volunteered to assist the Labour Party through "Operation Victory" | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁶ |
| Displayed a Labour election poster at home | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁷ | NONE OF ABOVE | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁰ |
| Donated money to Labour Party funds | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁹ | | |
13. Have you ever been a delegate to a Labour Party Annual or Special Conference?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION
- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> ² |
14. Each year, the Labour Party ballots its members for the election of representatives to the National Executive Committee. Did you vote in the LAST N.E.C. elections?
PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION
- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> ² |
| Not then a member | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁰ |

15. When John Smith died, the Labour Party balloted its members for the election of a new Leader and Deputy Leader. Did you vote in this election?

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Not then a member	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

16. Have you ever been a member of any of the following groups affiliated to the Labour Party?

PLEASE TICK AS MANY OPTIONS AS APPROPRIATE

Co-operative Society	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Black Socialist Society	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Fabian Society	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Christian Socialist Movement	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Labour Reform	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	National Union of Labour and	
Labour Students (NOLS)	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	Socialist Societies	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Socialist Health Association	<input type="checkbox"/> 9	Socialist Educational Association	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Young Labour	<input type="checkbox"/> 11	Socialist Environmental Resource Assocn.	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
Young Socialists	<input type="checkbox"/> 13	NONE OF ABOVE	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

17. Many people are members of The Labour Party as well as other outside groups. How about you? Have you ever been, or considered becoming, a member of any of the following groups?

PLEASE TICK AS MANY OPTIONS AS APPROPRIATE, BUT ONLY ONE PER GROUP

	CONSIDERED MEMBERSHIP	CURRENT MEMBER	PAST MEMBER
Amnesty International	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 31	<input type="checkbox"/> 61
AWL/Socialist Organiser	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 32	<input type="checkbox"/> 62
Anti-Nazi League	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 33	<input type="checkbox"/> 63
CND	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 34	<input type="checkbox"/> 64
Campaign for Labour Party Democracy	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 35	<input type="checkbox"/> 65
Campaign Group (Supporters' Network)	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 36	<input type="checkbox"/> 66
Communist Party of Great Britain	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 37	<input type="checkbox"/> 67
Charter 88	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	<input type="checkbox"/> 38	<input type="checkbox"/> 68
Democratic Left	<input type="checkbox"/> 9	<input type="checkbox"/> 39	<input type="checkbox"/> 69
Friends of the Earth	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 40	<input type="checkbox"/> 70
Greenpeace	<input type="checkbox"/> 11	<input type="checkbox"/> 41	<input type="checkbox"/> 71
Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform	<input type="checkbox"/> 12	<input type="checkbox"/> 42	<input type="checkbox"/> 72
Labour Co-ordinating Committee	<input type="checkbox"/> 13	<input type="checkbox"/> 43	<input type="checkbox"/> 73
League Against Cruel Sports	<input type="checkbox"/> 14	<input type="checkbox"/> 44	<input type="checkbox"/> 74
Liberty (Council for Civil Liberties)	<input type="checkbox"/> 15	<input type="checkbox"/> 45	<input type="checkbox"/> 75
Militant (Tendency)	<input type="checkbox"/> 16	<input type="checkbox"/> 46	<input type="checkbox"/> 76
National Trust	<input type="checkbox"/> 17	<input type="checkbox"/> 47	<input type="checkbox"/> 77
RSPB	<input type="checkbox"/> 18	<input type="checkbox"/> 48	<input type="checkbox"/> 78
Save The Children	<input type="checkbox"/> 19	<input type="checkbox"/> 49	<input type="checkbox"/> 79
Shelter	<input type="checkbox"/> 20	<input type="checkbox"/> 50	<input type="checkbox"/> 80
Socialist Action	<input type="checkbox"/> 21	<input type="checkbox"/> 51	<input type="checkbox"/> 81
Socialist Labour Party	<input type="checkbox"/> 22	<input type="checkbox"/> 52	<input type="checkbox"/> 82
Socialist Workers' Party	<input type="checkbox"/> 23	<input type="checkbox"/> 53	<input type="checkbox"/> 83
Tribune (local group/newspaper subscriber)	<input type="checkbox"/> 24	<input type="checkbox"/> 54	<input type="checkbox"/> 84
World Wide Fund for Nature	<input type="checkbox"/> 25	<input type="checkbox"/> 55	<input type="checkbox"/> 85
Other (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> 26	<input type="checkbox"/> 56	<input type="checkbox"/> 86
	<input type="checkbox"/> 27	<input type="checkbox"/> 57	<input type="checkbox"/> 87
NONE OF ABOVE	<input type="checkbox"/> 0		

18. Before becoming a member of The Labour Party were you ever a member, or did you consider membership, of any of the following political parties?

PLEASE TICK AS MANY OPTIONS AS APPROPRIATE, BUT ONLY ONE PER PARTY

	MEMBER	CONSIDERED MEMBERSHIP
Conservative Party	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
Liberal Party/Liberal Democrats	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 12
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 13
Green Party	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 14
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 15
Please Specify	<hr/>	
NONE OF ABOVE	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

19. Do you perceive yourself as being...

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION ONLY

an Anarchist	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
a Conservative	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
a Democratic Socialist	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
a Liberal	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
a Marxist	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
a Social Democrat	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
a Socialist	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Please Specify	<hr/>
NONE OF ABOVE	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

20. Below is a list of politicians, both alive and dead, who have been prominent members of The Labour Party. Which of these people would you describe as Socialists?

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION PER POLITICIAN

	DEFINITELY ARE/WERE	DEFINITELY ARE NOT/WERE NOT	MAYBE
Margaret Beckett	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 21	<input type="checkbox"/> 41
Tony Benn	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 22	<input type="checkbox"/> 42
Tony Blair	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 23	<input type="checkbox"/> 43
Jim Callaghan	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 24	<input type="checkbox"/> 44
Robin Cook	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 25	<input type="checkbox"/> 45
Michael Foot	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 26	<input type="checkbox"/> 46
Harriet Harman	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 27	<input type="checkbox"/> 47
Roy Hattersley	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	<input type="checkbox"/> 28	<input type="checkbox"/> 48
Denis Healey	<input type="checkbox"/> 9	<input type="checkbox"/> 29	<input type="checkbox"/> 49
Neil Kinnock	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 30	<input type="checkbox"/> 50
John Prescott	<input type="checkbox"/> 11	<input type="checkbox"/> 31	<input type="checkbox"/> 51
Dennis Skinner	<input type="checkbox"/> 12	<input type="checkbox"/> 32	<input type="checkbox"/> 52
John Smith	<input type="checkbox"/> 13	<input type="checkbox"/> 33	<input type="checkbox"/> 53
Jack Straw	<input type="checkbox"/> 14	<input type="checkbox"/> 34	<input type="checkbox"/> 54

21a. Are you CURRENTLY, or have you EVER been, a member of a trade union or staff association?

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION Yes ☐1 Go to Q. 21b
 No ☐2 Go to Q. 22

21b. If "Yes", what is the name of your trade union or staff association?

PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

22. Next there is a set of statements about important political issues. We would like to know how much you agree or disagree with them

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION FOR EACH STATEMENT

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
(i) "A Labour Government should return companies like the electricity and water suppliers, and British Rail to national public ownership"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
(ii) "The new Clause Four is better than the old one"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
(iii) "In principle, the level of taxation should be proportional to the level of income"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
(iv) "Hospital trusts, contracting-out, and the employment of managers and administrators makes the NHS more efficient"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
(v) "Constituency Labour parties should have the exclusive right to select their own Parliamentary candidates"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
(vi) "Labour should resist further moves to integrate the European Common Market"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
(vii) "We should keep the House of Lords rather than replacing it with a directly-elected second chamber as in the United States"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
(viii) "Britain should have a popularly-elected Head of State, such as a President, rather than an hereditary monarch like the Queen"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
(xi) "The Labour Party should ensure that lesbians and gay men enjoy an equal place in our society"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
(x) "The Labour Party should always stand by its principles even if this should lose an election"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
(xi) "The trade union movement has too much power over The Labour Party"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
(xii) "Members of groups which have been expelled from The Labour Party should never be allowed to rejoin the Party"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
(xiii) "The central question of British politics is the class struggle between capital and labour"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
(xiv) "The Labour Party must ensure that power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many not the few and the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1

23.

What was your age last birthday?
PLEASE WRITE IN AGE YEARS
24.

Please indicate your gender

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

Male

Female

☐¹

☐²
25.

When talking about BRITISH POLITICS as a whole, some people talk of a "left-right spectrum" In other words, Conservatives are seen to be on the right, Labour on the left, and the Liberal Democrats somewhere in the middle. Where would you place YOUR views in relation to British politics on the scale below

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION ONLY

LEFT-WING

VERY

☐⁷

MOSTLY

☐⁶

QUITE

☐⁵

NEITHER

☐⁴

QUITE

☐³

MOSTLY

☐²

RIGHT-WING

VERY

☐¹

26.

When talking about INTERNAL LABOUR PARTY politics, the same scale may be used. Some people are left-wing Labour supporters, whilst others are much more right-wing Labour supporters. Where would you place YOUR views on the scale?

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION ONLY

LEFT-WING

VERY

☐⁷

MOSTLY

☐⁶

QUITE

☐⁵

NEITHER

☐⁴

QUITE

☐³

MOSTLY

☐²

RIGHT-WING

VERY

☐¹

27.

Compared with FIVE YEARS ago, do you think that the policies of The Labour Party have become more left wing, more right wing, or have they stayed about the same?

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

More left-wing

☐¹

More right-wing

☐²

Stayed about the same

☐³

28.

Five years ago in the 1992 General Election some people did not manage to vote. How about you? Did you vote in the 1992 General Election?

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

Yes

☐¹

Go to Q. 29

No

☐²

Go to Q. 30

29.

Which Party did you vote for in the 1992 General Election?

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

Conservative

☐¹

Labour

☐²

Liberal Democrat

☐³

Other

☐⁴

Please specify

30.

At what age did you finish full-time education?

PLEASE WRITE IN AGE YEARS

PLEASE TICK HERE IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION

☐⁻¹

31.

What is your highest educational qualification?

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

Higher Degree (Ph.D., M.Sc. etc.)

☐¹

First Degree (B.A, B.Sc. etc.)

☐²

HND/BTEC/GNVQ (or equivalent)

☐³

A' Level (or equivalent)

☐⁴

O' Level/CSE/GCSE (or equivalent)

☐⁵

Other

☐⁶

Please specify

NONE OF ABOVE

☐⁰

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32. Some people feel that certain issues are of particular importance. In the last FIVE years, have you participated in a demonstration or some other form of public protest concerning any of the following issues?

PLEASE TICK AS MANY OPTIONS AS APPROPRIATE

- Local school(s)

☐1
- Local hospital(s)

☐2
- Live export of animals

☐3
- Bloodsports/Hunting

☐4
- Road building

☐5
- Other (please specify)

☐6
-
- NONE OF ABOVE

☐0

33. Are you...

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

- Single

☐1
- Married/Living with partner

☐2
- Divorced

☐3
- Widowed

☐4
- Separated

☐5

34. Which of the following descriptions best describes what YOU and your PARTNER/SPOUSE (if you have one) were doing last week, that is in the seven days ending last Sunday?

PLEASE TICK AS MANY OPTIONS AS APPROPRIATE

	YOU	PARTNER/ SPOUSE		YOU	PARTNER/ SPOUSE
Full-time employment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 21	Part-time employment	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 26
Full-time education	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 22	Part-time education	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 27
Unemployed and claiming state benefit	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 23	Unemployed and not claiming state benefit	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	<input type="checkbox"/> 28
Permanently sick or disabled	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 24	Retired	<input type="checkbox"/> 9	<input type="checkbox"/> 29
Housewife/househusband	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 25	Voluntary employment	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 30
			Multiple part-time employment	<input type="checkbox"/> 11	<input type="checkbox"/> 31
NONE OF ABOVE	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 00			

35. What is your occupation, if you have one? If not working, please answer for your LAST job. Please answer in as much detail as possible, mentioning the type of work you do, whether you are responsible for any staff (if so, how many), size of company, professional qualifications etc.

PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

36. ...and for your partner or spouse, if you have one? If not working, please answer for their LAST job. If you do not have a partner/spouse, please go to Question 37.

PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

44.

Have you been resident at your current address for more than TWELVE months?

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

Yes

No

☐¹

☐²
45.

It is only a few months since the last General Election and the election of a new Labour Government. Did you vote in the 1997 General Election?

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

Yes

No

☐¹

☐²

Go to Q. 46

Go to Q. 47
46.

Which party did you vote for in the 1997 General Election?

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION

Conservative

Labour

Liberal Democrat

Other

Please specify

☐¹

☐²

☐³

☐⁴
47.

You have been sent this survey because you are a member of The Labour Party. Do you have any comments about The Labour Party? If so, please use the space below.

PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW

This survey is part of an on-going study of the attitudes of Labour Party members and we would like to take the opportunity to talk to some of you in more detail. If you would be willing to participate in future research projects, please complete the section below. *This will be detached from your completed questionnaire on receipt and will remain confidential.*

Surname

First Name(s)

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms)

Address

Postcode

Telephone
(incl. STD code)

For Office use only:

LMSN

Date Rec'd

Date Enc'd

Appendix 4

Labour Membership Study (Oxford West sample only)

Analysis of Non-Response

	SAMPLE		NON-RESPONDENTS		
	N	TOTAL	%	N	%
<i>Subscription rate</i>					
Standard	122		61.0	50	53.8
Reduced	61		30.5	33	35.5
Trade union	17		8.5	10	10.7
		200	100.0		93
<i>New membership</i>					
Standard	20		47.6	9	39.1
Reduced	13		31.0	9	39.1
Trade union	8		19.0	5	21.8
		41	20.5		23
Membership 1+ years		159	79.5		70
		200	100.0		93
<i>Gender</i>					
Male	106		53.0	43	46.2
Female	90		45.0	46	49.5
Not specified	4		2.0	4	4.3
		200	100.0		93
<i>Ward</i>					
Abingdon N.	24		12.0	9	9.7
Abingdon S.	19		9.5	7	7.6
Botley	25		12.5	15	16.1
Central	6		3.0	2	2.1
Cherwell	17		8.5	8	8.6
Kidlington	20		10.0	8	8.6
North	29		14.5	17	18.3
West	30		15.0	16	17.2
Wolvercote	30		15.0	11	11.8
		200	100.0		93

Appendix 5

Labour Membership Study

Headline Frequencies of Group Membership

	N	%
	<i>base=306</i>	
Q16 – Affiliated Groups		
Black Socialist Society	7	2.3
Christian Socialist Movement	15	4.9
Co-operative Society	60	19.6
Fabian Society	21	6.9
Labour Reform	0	0.0
National Organisation of Labour Students	16	5.2
National Union of Labour and Socialist Societies	1	0.3
Socialist Educational Association	8	2.6
Socialist Environmental Resource Association	5	1.6
Socialist Health Association	5	1.6
Young Labour	9	2.9
Young Socialists	15	4.9
Q17 – Pressure Groups		
Alliance for Workers Liberty/Socialist Organiser	1	0.3
Amnesty International	126	41.2
Anti-Nazi League	16	5.2
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament	45	14.7
Campaign for Labour Party Democracy	5	1.6
Campaign Group supporters' network	5	1.6
Charter 88	51	16.7
Communist Party of Great Britain	4	1.3
Democratic Left	6	2.0
Friends of the Earth	68	22.2
Greenpeace	69	22.5
Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform	7	2.3
Labour Co-ordinating Committee	3	1.0
League Against Cruel Sports	14	4.6
Liberty/National Council for Civil Liberties	19	6.2
Militant Tendency/Socialist Party	3	1.0
National Trust	61	19.9
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	44	14.4
Save the Children	28	9.2
Shelter	45	14.7
Socialist Action	1	0.3
Socialist Labour Party	6	2.0
Socialist Workers Party	5	1.6
Tribune local network	4	1.3
World Fund for Nature/World Wildlife Fund	18	5.9

(all figures are percentages)

Appendix 6

Labour Membership Study:

Continuous Cluster Analysis of Group Membership
(four cluster solution)

	Cluster 1 (n=15)	Cluster 2 (n=57)	Cluster 3 (n=79)	Cluster 4 (n=155)
Q16-Affiliated Groups				
Co-operative Society	53.3	22.8	20.3	15.5
Black Socialist Society	6.7	0.0	0.0	3.9
Fabian Society	46.7	7.0	6.3	3.2
Christian Socialist Movement	13.3	3.5	7.6	3.2
Labour Students	80.0	3.5	2.5	0.0
Socialist Educational Association	6.7	0.0	5.1	1.9
Young Labour	26.7	1.8	2.5	1.3
Young Socialists	20.0	8.8	1.3	3.9
Q17 – Pressure Groups				
Amnesty International	13.3	78.9	100.0	0.0
Anti-Nazi League	13.3	3.5	6.3	4.5
C N D	13.3	43.9	11.4	5.8
Campaign for Labour Party Democracy	0.0	1.8	1.3	1.9
Communist Party of Great Britain	6.7	1.8	1.3	0.6
Charter 88	13.3	47.4	16.5	5.8
Democratic Left	13.3	3.5	1.3	0.6
Friends of the Earth	0.0	86.0	12.7	5.8
Greenpeace	20.0	96.5	3.8	5.2
Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform	0.0	5.3	3.8	0.6
League Against Cruel Sports	26.7	10.5	1.3	1.9
Liberty	13.3	14.0	11.4	0.0
National Trust	16.7	36.8	20.3	12.9
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	0.0	21.1	16.5	12.3
Save the Children	0.0	12.3	13.9	6.5
Shelter	6.7	19.3	26.6	7.7
Socialist Labour Party	6.7	1.8	0.0	2.6
Socialist Workers Party	0.0	3.5	2.5	0.6
Tribune	6.7	0.0	1.3	1.3
World Fund for Nature	6.7	14.0	3.8	3.9

(all figures are percentages)

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