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**The Electoral Truce and Party Politics in Scotland During the Second  
World War**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy, Scottish History

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by me, that the work is my own, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Sarah Anne Moxey  
September 2022

## **Abstract**

This thesis focuses on Scottish politics during the Second World War and argues that the electoral truce, which was agreed at the outbreak of war, had a significant impact on the dynamics of party-politics in Scotland. As Scottish branches of the main political parties were some of the largest regional branches and in peacetime fairly autonomous, they provide an excellent insight into the difficulties regional and local parties faced in managing their organisations under the shadow of the truce. This thesis will articulate the struggle faced in managing the truce at a regional and local level and the tensions this raised within political parties around their operations. The electoral truce is an under-explored aspect of wartime politics, and this thesis provides an in-depth study which offers many new insights to the field of both Scottish and British wartime politics.

This is the primary theme throughout the thesis, namely the consequences to the operation of electoral and party-politics in Scotland as a result of the electoral truce agreement, which restricted normal peacetime political activity, and forced political parties to operate in much narrower parameters. This was compounded by parties conflating unnecessary restrictions into their understanding of the truce causing further impediments to political operations. The main focus of the first two chapters will be the impact of the misinterpretation of the electoral truce agreement by all political parties, which began as an unintentional result of poor communication, but soon became more calculated. The eventual use of the electoral truce as a convenient political tool to avoid tackling endemic organisational difficulties or to smooth over problematic inter-party relations by political party members, the media and central government, is a key factor explored throughout this thesis. Particular attention will be paid to the language and interpretation of the electoral truce agreement which allowed these misinterpretations to become entrenched.

The consequences of the electoral truce restrictions when electoral politics tried to function is then considered. By adapting a model of studying wartime by-elections proposed by Paul Addison, the difference between the British and Scottish experience will be shown most clearly. Chapters three and four will offer an in-depth examination of nine by-elections held between 1939 and 1945, to provide examples of where political issues in Scotland diverged from British trends. It also considers the importance of minor political parties in maintaining some form of political competition, and will argue that the spirit of party-political contest was more prevalent in Scotland for the duration of the war. The final chapter of the thesis will examine the impact of the truce when electoral politics returned to peacetime operations. There will be a particular focus on the how much the electoral truce had impacted on political parties' operational abilities through a detailed study of the 1945 general election in Scotland. The attempts of parties, both major and minor, to ready their organisations for full-scale political contest will be one of the foremost considerations. Also, the landslide victory achieved by Labour in the rest of the UK was not as successful in Scotland, it will be argued that this was as a result of long-term organisational issues which had been compounded by the war.

This thesis will show the importance of examining the way the electoral truce agreement was interpreted, as it is a crucial element in better understanding the tempestuous fortunes experienced by Scottish political parties during the Second World War.

## Lay Summary

This thesis focuses on Scottish politics during the Second World War and argues that the electoral truce, which was agreed at the outbreak of war, had a major impact on party-politics in Scotland. As Scottish branches of the main political parties were some of the largest regional branches and in peacetime fairly independent, they show the difficulties regional and local parties faced in managing their organisations alongside the electoral truce. The electoral truce agreement restricted normal peacetime political activity, which was limited further by parties including other unrelated restrictions into their understanding of the truce. This then caused confusion and reduced political operations. This thesis will focus on the struggle faced in managing the truce at a regional and local level, and the tensions this raised within political parties around their operations. The electoral truce is an area of wartime politics which is not fully understood, and this thesis provides a detailed study which offers many new insights to both Scottish and British wartime politics.

The thesis will consider these ideas by examining the conditions that party politics operated within during the Second World War. The main focus of the first two chapters will be the impact of the misunderstanding of the electoral truce agreement by all political parties, which began accidentally because of poor communication, but soon became more calculated. The thesis explores the idea that the electoral truce became a political tool used by parties as a scapegoat for their failure to tackle longstanding organisational difficulties, or to smooth over problematic party relationships. The thesis will then consider the consequences of the electoral truce restrictions when party politics tried to function as normal. It will adapt a model of studying wartime by-elections proposed by historian Paul Addison, to show the difference between the British and Scottish experiences. The in-depth study of nine by-elections held between 1939 to 1945, will provide examples of where political issues in Scotland differed from the rest of Britain. It will also argue that party politics still occurred in Scotland during the war years because three minor political parties were not part of the electoral truce, and continued to contest elections. Finally, the thesis will examine the return to normal political activity through a detailed study of the 1945 general election in Scotland. It will consider the effect of a lack of political activity in wartime and what this did to political parties and their ability to operate as normal during a general election campaign. It will also consider why the landslide victory achieved by Labour in the rest of the UK was not as successful in Scotland.

This thesis will show the importance of examining the way the electoral truce agreement operated, as it is a crucial element in better understanding the experience of Scottish political parties during the Second World War.

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Finally, this thesis is dedicated in loving memory to my Grandmother Elizabeth Dunne, (1927-2021) who passed away just as the project neared completion. She inspired my love of history when she purchased my first history book aged 7, and encouraged my interest in the subject throughout her life.

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**List of Abbreviations**

CCO	Conservative Central Office
CLP	Constituency Labour Party
CPA	Conservative Party Archives
CPGBA	Communist Party of Great Britain Archive
DLP	District Labour Party
GUA	Glasgow Unionist Association
ILP	Independent Labour Party
LAC	Local Area Committee's
LN	Liberal Nationals
LPA	Labour Party Archives
MOI	Ministry of Information
NAC	National Administrative Council
NEC	National Executive Committee
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NUA	National Unionist Association
SCLP	Scottish Council of the Labour Party
SCUA	Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association
SEC	Scottish Executive Committee
SLF	Scottish Liberal Federation
SNP	Scottish National Party
SSP	Scottish Socialist Party
SUMC	Scottish Unionist Members Committee
TNA	The National Archives
TUC	Trades Union Congress

## **Introduction – All Quiet on the Political Front?**

On the morning of 3 September 1939, coinciding with the announcement that Britain was at war with Germany, a selection conference was being held by the Scottish Council of the Labour Party (SCLP) to decide upon a candidate for the upcoming Clackmannan and East Stirlingshire by-election. Even in the midst of international strife, the business of politics continued. The wailing of air-raid sirens briefly interrupted proceedings, reminding those present that they would soon be facing a changed reality.<sup>1</sup> It was presumed by the SCLP that the by-election would likely not go ahead or would be uncontested. Members were convinced that soon all would be very quiet on the political front. Yet a month later the chosen candidate, Arthur Woodburn, found himself in the first contested by-election of the war. It indicated that nothing, not even war, would stop the relentless operation of party politics in Scotland.

This thesis focuses on Scottish politics during the Second World War and places a particular emphasis on the impact the electoral truce, which was agreed at the outbreak of war, on the dynamics of party-politics in Scotland. This crucial yet under-explored aspect of wartime politics is placed sharply in focus. It will be argued that wartime politics, not only in Scotland but in Britain, is better understood when viewed through the lens of the truce as it directed and dictated political behaviour across all parties. The way the truce was misconstrued by all political parties will also be closely examined. Particular attention will be paid to the nuances of political language and interpretation of the electoral truce agreement. This is one of the major arguments advanced by this thesis. The misinterpretation of the truce by politicians, the media and central government is a key factor explored throughout this

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<sup>1</sup> NLS, Papers of Arthur Woodburn, Acc.7656/Box 4, minutes of meeting of the SCLP, 3 September 1939.

thesis. In particular, the use of the electoral truce by political parties as a scapegoat for their inability to tackle endemic organisational difficulties. Examination of this relatively unknown aspect of the electoral truce unlocks a greater comprehension of wartime politics as a whole. Alongside the focus on the truce, the thesis will conduct a re-examination of Scotland's political landscape through looking at the Scottish perspective on the debates which have dominated studies of British wartime politics.<sup>2</sup> These include: The decline of party politics and movement away from party, the impact of the coalition government and emergence of consensus politics and the fall of Conservatism with the growth of progressive socialism. This is not merely an attempt to revise British narratives from a Scottish angle. There are several key assertions which this thesis will advance: First, that there was a distinctly Scottish political narrative in the period 1939-1945 which differed from the wider British narrative. The pervading sense of Britishness which characterises the study of the Second World War and allows for little regional variance will be explored. It will be shown that Scotland's political landscape had distinct traditions and occurrences which differed from the rest of the UK.<sup>3</sup> Many of the political tensions which were building in 1930s Scotland culminated during the war years from the declining importance of the Liberals, the weakness of Labour after the ILP disaffiliation, the birth of the SNP and the growing sense of anger at centralised decision making through the National Government which excluded

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<sup>2</sup> The main works which purport these ideas are: Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* Revised (London, 1994). Kevin Jefferys, *The Churchill Coalition and Wartime Politics, 1940–1945* (Manchester, 1992). Steven, Fielding 'The Second World War and Popular Radicalism: The Significance of the 'Movement Away from Party'. *History* 80 (258), 2010, pp. 38–58. John Ramsden, *An Appetite for Power: A History of the Conservative Party Since 1830* (London, 1992). Paul Addison, 'By-elections of the Second World War', in Chris Cook & John Ramsden (eds.) *By-elections in British Politics* (London, 2003), pp. 130-56. Robert Crowcroft, *Attlee's War: World War II and The Making of a Labour Leader* (London, 2011). Andrew Thorpe, *Parties at War: Political Organization in Second World War Britain* (Oxford, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Sonya Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2004).

Scotland's sense of identity.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, the thesis will consider the impact of the truce on the operation of the electoral system. This will be explored through examining by-elections which the truce was designed to limit. But with minor political parties not being subject to the conditions of the truce, more contests occurred than anticipated. The thesis will explore what this meant in practice for constituency branches of all parties from being unable to undertake their normal political activity and the erosion this caused to the party machinery. It will also demonstrate that even in a heavily restricted political system, one of the few ways to express any discontent was through the ballot box. This gave minor parties and sections of the electorate some method to air grievances. The high number of by-election contests in Scotland and would suggest they were used as an outlet for political tensions. Thirdly, it will examine the general election of 1945 in Scotland and explore the return to normal political activity and what impact the restrictions caused by the electoral truce had on parties across the political spectrum.

The thesis is primarily a study of political party operations during the Second World War in Scotland. Yet the methodological approach to the thesis will borrow principles from 'new political history' as this thesis aims to examine political activity from several different perspectives.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the use of central party records, constituency papers will be examined to ensure the narrative considers the political action from both the centre and the grassroots of the parties, allowing an all-encompassing perspective. The public and media

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<sup>4</sup> R.J Finlay, 'Unionism and the Dependency Culture: Politics and the State Intervention in Scotland, 1918-1997', in Catriona M.M. MacDonald (ed.) *Unionist Scotland* (Edinburgh 1998), pp. 100-16 at pp. 101-2.

<sup>5</sup> David Craig, 'High Politics and the New Political History', *The Historical Journal*, 53 (2010), pp. 453-75. Stephen Fielding, 'Review: Looking for a New Political History', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42, (2007), pp. 515-24. Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for The People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England 1867-1914* (Cambridge, 1998).

perspectives on events will be interwoven through the use of newspaper articles and reports from the Mass Observation archive. Historian Jon Lawrence has called for a more all-encompassing approach to the study of political history, particularly for periods where politics 'in flux.' He points to several periods in British history where this was the case, one of which was the period 1940-51.<sup>6</sup> In agreement with the principles of 'new political history', the aim of this thesis is to examine a range of political opinion to allow a fuller picture of the landscape of Scottish wartime politics to be painted.

### **Approach and Sources**

The thesis mostly considers the events from the perspective of the political parties operating in Scotland for the duration of the war: the Unionists, Labour, Liberals, Liberal Nationals, Scottish National Party, the Independent Labour party, the Communists and the Common Wealth party.<sup>7</sup> The source material used to construct an account of wartime Scottish politics covers a wide variety of different party-political materials. The main sources are the minute books, correspondence and internal memoranda that constitute the records of parties. Both the National and Scottish branches have been considered for the Unionists and Labour parties to aid comparison between the Scottish and wider British perspective on the political events.

The Labour party records are a little different to other parties as they are held centrally at the Labour Party Archives (LPA). Generally, the party was controlled more centrally with

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<sup>6</sup> Jon Lawrence, 'Political History' in Stefan Berger, Heiko Feldner, and Kevin Passmore (eds,) *Writing History Theory & Practice* (London, 2003), at pp. 323-43.

<sup>7</sup> The Conservative party were known in Scotland at this time as the Scottish Unionist party. The Liberal Nationals are only really discussed in the final chapter in the General Election, it never fought a by-election and as the LN's were so closely allied with the Unionists there was little to say about the party otherwise. Although The Common Wealth party only formed in 1942 and operated mainly in England, its entry into the Midlothian by-election of February 1943 means it is discussed in the second half of the thesis.

divisional branches not given as much autonomy as its counterparts in the Conservative and Liberal parties. There was a Scottish Executive Committee (SEC), which met every few months and records exist for this committee until the end of 1942. It is believed that the rest of these records could have been lost due to bombing raids conducted during the war.<sup>8</sup> However, occasional actions from the SEC minutes were included in the discussions of the National Executive Committee after 1942. The Labour party minutes gave an interesting perspective as, although the truce was discussed extensively at annual conferences and in National Executive Committee meetings, a distinctly Scottish perspective to the truce was not easy to identify. The minutes of the SEC were a useful resource to attempt to reconstruct that perspective. Fortunately, the Communist party records are also located in the Labour Party Archives. The party have recorded in quite extensive detail its part in aiding Scottish Labour with its general election campaign. This assistance given to the Labour party in the general election campaign has not been discussed by historians who have examined the Communist party in this period, and will offer some new insights to thoroughly examine Scottish Labour's 1945 campaign.<sup>9</sup> However, caution must be taken with regards to the reliability of these records as the party does extol its part in the general election campaign most emphatically. The eventual aim of affiliation with the Labour party must be noted, and the records may well contain a degree of exaggeration in order to ensure the party appeared favourable for consideration.

The records of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Associations (SCUA) and the Scottish Liberal Federation (SLF) are independent from the national level party records. The

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<sup>8</sup> According to the LPA archivist, the minutes may have been left in one of the rooms in the House of Commons which was bombed during the war.

<sup>9</sup> Kevin Morgan, 'Away from the Party and into "The Party": British Wartime Communism and the 1945 Election', *Socialist History*, 37 (2010), pp. 80-102. Andrew Thorpe, 'Locking out the Communists: The Labour Party and the Communist Party 1939-1946', *Twentieth Century British History*, 25 (2014), pp.221-50.

Conservative Party Archives (CPA) held at the Bodleian in Oxford provided a good overview of policy decisions and reports into the electoral truce. Nevertheless, the details contained within the SCUA minutes of the divisional branches gave a better indication of the reaction to the truce in Scotland.

The records of minor parties varied in the amount of information that they yielded. The Scottish National Party (SNP) records had a lot of interesting information to provide despite being spread across the archives of several individuals.<sup>10</sup> Records of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) were not as well maintained as the major parties. Nonetheless, there was enough information available from records of the Glasgow Shettleston branch from 1939-1945 and the minutes of the National Administrative Council (NAC) from 1940-45 to gain an understanding of its policies. However, as David James notes in his essay on researching the records of the ILP, unlike other political parties, decisions made at branch level in the ILP could often be more important than those made at national level. The council was called 'the administrative council' for a reason; it existed purely to enact resolutions passed at the annual conference, raise funds for publications and was not to interfere with the affairs of the local organisations.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the fact that much of the information employed in this chapter came from a local branch does not actually give a less accurate picture of the decisions made by the ILP. Records from the Communist party are even more sporadic as

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<sup>10</sup> The SNP files for the period of the war are spread between the former Leaders and Party Chairman Dr. Robert McIntyre and Professor Douglas Young, both held at the National Library of Scotland. See full bibliography for details.

<sup>11</sup> David James, 'Researching the History of the ILP', in David James, Tony Jowitt & Keith Laybourne (eds,) *Centennial History of the Independent Labour Party: A Collection of Essays* (Halifax, 1992,) pp. 338-9.

some are also held in the LPA, but only from 1943-45. There are microfilm copies of earlier records held within the Comintern archives in Moscow.<sup>12</sup>

As this is primarily a study of party politics, there will be little emphasis on the role played by individual politicians. As such, the personal papers and memoirs of the notable politicians of the era are only included if they are related to the politics of their affiliated party. The thesis draws heavily on newspapers as a medium for understanding political party activities, they often assisted in adding more information and further details to decisions which were mentioned within the official party records. Quite often, the specifics of a decision were made explicit in a statement to the press rather than in the party minutes where only a mere note was made. The intimate details of by-elections and general election campaigns are also more extensively covered within newspapers than they are in party minutes. Reports from the Mass Observation archive, particularly for by-elections, have been utilised to provide an all-encompassing approach. Mass Observation did not carry out research in Scotland to the same extent as in England, but several by-elections have been covered in remarkable depth. This allows the opinions of contemporary voters to be added. The lack of political polling in this period has meant a heavy reliance on the electoral statistics compiled by F.W.S. Craig and calculations made from his data are included in appendices A and C of this thesis.<sup>13</sup>

Although this thesis has been divided into five chapters, it follows the classic three act narrative through the examination of the following themes: the electoral truce, by-elections and the general election. The first two chapters will examine the operation and

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<sup>12</sup> Keith Laybourne & Dylan Murphy (eds.) *Under the Red Flag: A History of Communism in Britain c. 1849-1991* (Thrup, 1999), p. 221.

<sup>13</sup> F.W.S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1918-1949*, 3rd edition (Chichester, 1983).

interpretation of the electoral truce in more detail than any other historian has attempted hitherto. The precise and ambiguous wording of the truce will be dissected, as will consideration of the different perspective's political parties, and factions within them, applied to the agreement. The thesis will argue that the misunderstanding initially arose from the enactment of separate legislation at the same time as the truce was agreed, causing confusion and difficulties in interpretation which persisted for the duration of the war. The chapters will explore the evolution of this original entirely innocent misunderstanding of the electoral truce to a deliberate and ambiguous application of the truce agreement by political parties. Chapters three and four will examine the consequences of the electoral truce when by-election contests were held in Scotland, and it will assess the arguments that non-governmental candidates used to justify their contention of by-election vacancies. By-elections will be used as a small-scale case study of the political mood in Scotland during this time period. This was because there were few other outlets available to register any sense of dissent with a heavily regulated wartime government. The final chapter will then consider the return of normal electioneering in the general election of 1945 and what effect the stagnation of politics in wartime had on political parties and political operations in Scotland. The differing result of the general election north of the border with Labour not performing as well as expected will be examined, with particular consideration as to the poor condition of Labour's Scottish operations from 1932 onwards and the effect that this had on the party's ability to rally ahead of the election.

The resulting conclusions from this unprecedented examination of Scottish politics will finally address the silence that exists in the historiography for the years 1939-1945, when neither the tragedy of war, nor the imposition of an electoral truce could halt the party-political game.

## A Silence in the Sources

The current historiography of Scottish wartime politics would lead one to the conclusion that political operations were halted during the Second World War. It is predominantly a six-year gap in knowledge sitting at either side of the widely discussed minefield of inter-war politics and the allegedly 'consensual' post-war decades. The perils of conventional and often unthinking periodisation in the historiography have led to this gap in knowledge, as studies of the interwar period begin in 1919 and end in 1939. Then post-war studies begin in 1945 with more reflection on the state of politics before the war than during. This is something which Robert Crowcroft has discussed in his recent volume *The End is Nigh*, his re-examination of the period leading up to the Second World War. He notes that 1935-1940 rather than 1935-39 is a more logical periodisation of pre-war politics due to the high political intrigue which occurred during that time. The political agenda of the 1930s did not merely end on September 3 1939.<sup>14</sup>

There is a convenience offered by traditional periodisation – events can be boxed neatly into time periods which may not necessarily fit the actual circumstances. The political turmoil of the first half of the century, combined with two World Wars has very much moulded the way historians have studied the period. The old adage that 'history is just one event after another' is also an unfortunate truth and a logical end point is required when studying historical events.<sup>15</sup> However, careful consideration of where that end point is placed in a study is both important and fruitful. The existence of this thesis is partly due to these deficiencies of periodisation. The studies that currently exist are those which use the

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<sup>14</sup> Crowcroft, *The End is Nigh*, xiii & pp. 225-6.

<sup>15</sup> The quote has disputed origins and is most commonly attributed to the historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975).

Second World War as a marker point in their work, whether that be 1939 or 1945.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the actual period of the war has remained under-examined. This thesis focuses specifically on 1939-1945 as the period of study. This thesis therefore aims to fill a very specific gap in the literature. It will focus on the effect the electoral truce had on the operation of wartime politics in both a Scottish and British context. As the electoral truce was a product of the wartime conditions, the period of 1939-1945 is suitable for this study. Although discussed by Andrew Thorpe and Robert Crowcroft in their work, the significant depth of analysis that this thesis offers on the truce has taken their work and expanded upon it. The way the truce was merged with ideas around national unity in the early part of the war to ensure political controversy was minimised will be examined, especially when the truce was employed by governmental by-election candidates as part of their own campaign tactics.

The historiography of Scotland during the Second World War, similarly to wider British trends, is dominated by the subject of military history.<sup>17</sup> There are also several general

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<sup>16</sup> For the period 1919-39 see, Malcolm Petrie, *Popular Politics and Political Culture: Urban Scotland, 1918-1939* (Edinburgh, 2018). Asa Briggs and John Saville (eds.) *Essays in Labour History, 1918-1939* (London, 1977). Hamish Fraser, *Scottish Popular Politics: From Radicalism to Labour* (Edinburgh, 2000). Annmarie Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland, 1919-1939* (Edinburgh, 2010). William W. Knox (ed.) *Scottish Labour Leaders 1918-1939: A Biographical Dictionary* (Edinburgh, 1984). Tom Gallagher, 'Scottish Catholics and the British Left, 1918-1939', *Innes Review*, 34 (1983), pp. 17-42. Gidon Cohen, 'The Independent Labour Party, 1932-1939' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2000). Andrew Thorpe, *Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1992). Andrew Thorpe, (ed.) *The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-war Britain* (Exeter, 1989). I. G. C. Hutchison, 'Unionism Between the Two World Wars' in Catriona MacDonald (ed.) *Unionist Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2001), pp. 73-99. Gordon Brown, 'The Labour Party and Political Change in Scotland, 1918-1929: The Politics of Five Elections' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1982). R. Finlay, "'For or against?": Scottish Nationalists and the British Empire, 1919-1939', *Scottish Historical Review*, 71 (1992), pp. 184-206. R. J. Finlay, 'National Identity in Crisis: Politicians, Intellectuals and the "end of Scotland", 1920-1939', *History*, 79 (1994), pp. 242-59.

For the period after 1945 see, B. McLean, 'Labour in Scotland since 1945: myth and reality', in Gerry Hassan, (ed.) *The Scottish Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 2004), pp. 34-50. James Mitchell, 'Scotland in the Union, 1945-95: The Changing Nature of the Union State' in T.M. Devine and R.J. Finlay (eds.) *Scotland in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 1996), at pp. 85-101. Paula Somerville, *Through the Maelstrom: A History of the Scottish National Party 1945-1967* (Stirling, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> For example: Saul David, *Churchill's Sacrifice of the Highland Division, France 1940* (London, 1994).

overview accounts of Scottish history which do not devote more than a section or two to the wartime period.<sup>18</sup> During the past decade, the variety of work on Scotland's Second World War has been improved with material being published in a wider range of different subject areas.<sup>19</sup> While authors writing about Scotland's Second World War experiences increase, there is still more to be said. Especially in comparison to Scotland's First World War, with the recent centenary events seemingly stimulating interest in the subject. Also, while the First World War has had issues with the emphasis in the historiography on the military action at the Western Front, the Second World War has suffered deeply from being heavily characterised as 'the people's war.'<sup>20</sup> There is even an awareness from Scottish historians that the period is underexamined, with both Ewen Cameron and Catriona McDonald remarking on the lack of literature.<sup>21</sup> It is difficult to say for certain why there has been less interest from Scottish historians in exploring the Second World War. The portrayal of the war as an all-encompassing British experience is certainly a factor in the perception of the subject. With politics being centralised due to the existence of the coalition government and an electoral agreement in place to prevent contest, there has been an assumption from historians that there was little left to say about Scottish politics in this era. As will be shown throughout the thesis, Scottish historians neglect this important period at their peril.

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<sup>18</sup> Christopher Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Twentieth Century Scotland* (Edinburgh 1992). T.M. Devine & R.J. Finlay (eds.) *Scotland in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 1996). Catriona M.M. Macdonald, *Whaur Extremes Meet: Scotland's Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> More cultural, political and social aspects of the war era have been covered by the following historians: Trevor Royle, *A Time of Tyrants: Scotland and the Second World War* (Edinburgh, 2011). Trevor Royle, *The Flowers of the Forest: Scotland and the Great War* (Edinburgh, 2006) Wendy Ugolini, *Experiencing War as the 'enemy other': Italian Scottish Experience in World War II* (Manchester, 2011). Gordon Barclay, *If Hitler Comes: Preparing for Invasion: Scotland 1940* (Edinburgh, 2013). Gavin Bowd, *Fascist Scotland: Caledonia and the Far Right* (Edinburgh, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-45* (London, 1969).

<sup>21</sup> Catriona M.M. MacDonald, 'Wersh the Wine O'Victorie: Writing Scotland's Second World War,' *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 24 (2004), pp. 105-12. Ewen A. Cameron, *Impaled upon a Thistle: Scotland Since 1880* (Edinburgh, 2010), p. 179.

### **Political Fragmentation - Inter-war Politics**

Crowcroft noted that since 1918, the UK political landscape was dominated by the Conservatives, whether elected on under its own party colours or as the largest party in coalition or National Governments.<sup>22</sup> In the seven UK general elections held between 1918-1935 the Conservatives were the largest party at six of those.<sup>23</sup> However, in Scotland, it was the largest party in only four of the seven results.<sup>24</sup> This indicated some differences in Scotland's political landscape during the interwar years. The interwar period saw significant upheaval and change in Scottish politics. The collapse of the once dominant Liberals and the growing success of the Labour party changed the landscape of Scottish politics. Labour's success in forming a minority government in 1924 was aided by its Scottish vote.<sup>25</sup> However, the growing success of the party was brought to a shuddering halt by the creation of a National Government in 1931 to respond to the worldwide economic crisis. The Conservative and Unionist majority government was led by the Labour Prime Minister and Scot, Ramsay MacDonald, tearing the Labour Party apart as a result.<sup>26</sup> The Liberal and Labour parties split into those which supported the National Government and the those which chose to remain an independent party, hence the appearance of the national tag in the names of the political parties. These party fractures allowed the Unionists to grow in strength as there was little dissent from the status quo within the party.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Crowcroft, *The End is Nigh*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>23</sup> In 1923, the Unionists won the most seats out of all the parties, but the result was a hung parliament. The king's speech was voted down by Labour and the Liberals leading to a minority Labour government.

<sup>24</sup> Results compiled from Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*.

<sup>25</sup> David Powell, *British Politics 1910-1935: The Crisis of the Party System* (London, 2004), p. 140.

<sup>26</sup> For more on the National Government creation see Nick Smart, *The National Government, 1931-40* (Basingstoke, 1999). For more on Ramsay MacDonald and the break in the Labour party see David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London, 1977). For the Liberals see David Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 68-137.

<sup>27</sup> For a more in-depth explanation see Powell, *British Politics, 1910-1935*, especially pp. 142-90.

There was further strife when the Independent Labour party, the dominant force in the Scottish Labour movement, decided to disaffiliate from the Labour party and strike out alone. The remaining rump of the Scottish Labour movement had realised the extent to which it had relied upon the ILP for personnel and meeting space. Most importantly, the ILP had been the driving force of the Labour movement in Scotland. The disaffiliation required Scottish Labour to enact a complete re-organisation, overhaul its electoral machinery and reconsider the nature of the Labour movement.<sup>28</sup> It became more embedded in the overall hierarchy of the Labour party as previously the ILP held the reins of power. After disaffiliation, CLPs were set up which contained a larger group of members and were often poorly organised compared to CLP's in the rest of the UK. In 1939 Scottish Labour party membership was 29000 with the average constituency membership being 423, almost half the English average of 754.<sup>29</sup> Even worse, there was not a DLP in around a tenth of Scotland's 71 constituencies.<sup>30</sup> One of the main problems was that the Scottish Executive had very little power to manage its own organisation or policy matters as the TUC and NEC maintained a tight managerial grip over party affairs. The SCLP had little real authority and mostly acted on an advisory basis. It meant that unless the NEC maintained interest in Scottish affairs, the SCLP were left to its own devices; yet unable to enact any real changes. As Knox and MacKinlay's analysis has concluded, Labour in Scotland during the 1930s was weak at grassroots level and within the Scottish Executive. The Scottish Labour movement was further divided by the creation of the Scottish Socialist Party containing several of the

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<sup>28</sup> W.W Knox and A MacKinlay, 'The re-making of Scottish Labour in the 1930s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 6 (1995) pp. 174-93 at p. 188.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p. 175.

<sup>30</sup> Thorpe, p. 132.

major players in the Labour movement including Sir Patrick Dollan and Thomas Johnston.<sup>31</sup>

Although affiliated to the Labour party, the SSP still maintained a strong pacifist streak which would place it at odds with Labour at the outbreak of war. This significantly weakened the Scottish Labour movement, and its recovery from these events was still not complete by the time the Second World War broke out.

The other change the interwar period saw in Scottish politics was the emergence of the Scottish National Party. Formed initially as the National Party of Scotland in 1928, it amalgamated with the more right-wing, Unionist-leaning Scottish Party with members such as the Duke of Montrose and Andrew Dewar Gibb in 1934.<sup>32</sup> The party struggled to define itself as membership comprised of those with a variety of political perspectives.

Furthermore, the SNP de-facto leader John MacCormick was far more interested in setting up a cross-party Scottish Convention to decide upon a solution to Scottish home rule. As a result, the party drifted towards the realms of pressure group as the Second World War began and were a minute force in the Scottish political sphere.<sup>33</sup> The party were in many ways helped by the political situation the war caused. The exclusion from the electoral truce was a positive for the party, as it allowed it to maintain a purpose.

Political parties were by no means settled as the Second World War broke out, a form of National Government had existed since 1931, the splits within the Labour and Liberal parties as a result of the National Government formation were not healed. Fractious political

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<sup>31</sup> See Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977). James Jupp, *The Radical Left in Britain, 1931-1941* (London, 1982).

<sup>32</sup> R.J. Finlay, *Independent and Free: Scottish Politics and the Origins of the Scottish National Party, 1918-1945* (Edinburgh, 1994.)

<sup>33</sup> Richard J. Finlay, 'Pressure Group or Political Party?: The Nationalist Impact on Scottish Politics, 1928-1945.' *20th century British history*, 3 (1992), pp. 274-297.

affiliations existed between the so-called National Government partners. The coming of war and further coalition continued the interwar era friction between the political parties.

### **A Tenuous Truce**

When the electoral truce was agreed in 1939, few would realise what a critical role this agreement would play in the shaping of politics during the Second World War. The truce was arranged to ensure that the three main parties focused on governing and less on political in-fighting and campaigning. Political parties reacted in different ways to the electoral truce and attitudes towards it regularly changed within parties during the course of the war. For an agreement so crucial to the operation of wartime politics, very few historians have discussed the truce and the problems which arose from it in any significant depth. The exceptions are Robert Crowcroft and Andrew Thorpe who both considered political parties' interpretation of the truce, and the ways in which the precise meaning of the agreement could be moulded to suit the needs of a party at a given moment.<sup>34</sup> Both Crowcroft and Thorpe noted it was often grass-roots members who expressed their frustration at their parties being unable to freely contest a by-election and having to support a candidate from an opposing party. Crowcroft discusses this aspect of the truce, in particular, that Labour's NEC was becoming increasingly occupied by the electoral truce. The NEC were constantly working to prevent constituency parties from violating the terms of the truce.<sup>35</sup>

Several historians have discussed the Labour Party's issues with the electoral truce but in less depth than Crowcroft and Thorpe. Stephen Brooke takes an entirely different approach to

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<sup>34</sup> Crowcroft, *Attlee's War*, Thorpe, *Parties at War*.

<sup>35</sup> Crowcroft, *Attlee's War*, pp. 112-14.

Crowcroft in considering CLP's relationships with the truce to be equally, if not more, important than relations with the NEC and the Labour leadership, particularly as the levels of dissent continued to increase. He sees the main issue being CLP's perceptions of the leadership, Attlee in particular, as being remote.<sup>36</sup> Brooke raises a pertinent point that the problem between the 'high politics' aims of the leadership and the 'low politics' aims of the constituency party lies in the interpretation of the truce. In the eyes of the constituency party the truce was not meant to be a 'political truce' but an electoral truce which was only ever designed to prevent opposition parties fielding a candidate against the sitting party's candidate. The issuing of statements of support for opposing parties was moving far beyond the spirit of the electoral truce and into a new territory which those grass-roots members outside the political bubble of Westminster were increasingly concerned by.

This mid-war change to the parameters of the truce is a debate which will be considered in chapters two and four of the thesis, as it influenced how minor parties contesting seats against the government were viewed. It led to a much more hostile atmosphere, not just from non-participating political parties but also from some factions within the truce parties. Thorpe offers a more detailed consideration of the three coalition parties in his seminal study of political organisation during the war. He argues that the Conservative party was more aware of the extra parameters it added to the truce as being political manoeuvres. The statement that the Conservatives were placing country before party was a deliberately calculated decision to ensure it won the patriotic vote at the end of hostilities.<sup>37</sup> The change during the middle years of the war to terms of the electoral truce and the impact upon both political parties and the electorate, has not been discussed as widely in the literature on

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<sup>36</sup> Stephen Brooke, *Labour's War: The Labour Party during the Second World War* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 59-60.

<sup>37</sup> Thorpe, pp. 283-85.

Scottish politics. Indeed, in his article on Scottish Labour during the war, Christopher Harvie does not mention the broader issues and wrangling within the party in relation to Scotland. What also needs to be considered is the attitude of the Scottish Labour Party to the truce. There were tensions at a local level with CLPs being unwilling to publicly lend support to Unionists rivals in by-election contests, regardless of the direction on the matter from the NEC. The joint statement of support which was later introduced was treated with suspicion in Scottish CLPs as there was concern over the reactions of members if told to vote for rival parties.<sup>38</sup> There were long-standing rivalries between Labour and the Unionists/Liberals in the Glasgow area, having all fought for control of Glasgow City Council since the end of the First World War.<sup>39</sup>

In terms of left-wing politics in Scotland, both the ILP and Communists maintained a stronger presence than in other areas of the UK, predominantly in the industrial heartlands of the west coast and Glasgow areas. Neither of these parties was signed up to the electoral truce and for the first few years of the war provided a several candidates who challenged the government in election contests. The ILP has received less discussion than other small parties during the war and the examination of the Scottish aspects of the truce will allow its role to be explored more fully.<sup>40</sup>

Interestingly, Harvie argues the electoral truce in Scotland was placed under more strain than the rest of the UK in terms of independent candidates contesting by-elections. Out of

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<sup>38</sup> People's History Museum, Manchester, Labour Party Archives (LPA), Scottish Executive Committee (SEC), minutes of meeting, 18 April 1942.

<sup>39</sup> James Smyth, 'Resisting Labour: Unionists, Liberals, and Moderates in Glasgow Between the Wars,' *The Historical Journal*, 46, (2003), pp. 375–401.

<sup>40</sup> A recently published volume by Peter Thwaites, based on his PhD thesis, explores the ILP from 1938 to 1950. Again he notes the issues of periodisation in that the historiography leaves this significant gap in ILP history. See Peter Thwaites, *Waiting for the Workers: A History of the Independent Labour Party 1938-1950* (Gloucester, 2020).

the fifteen seats that fell vacant during the war, twelve of those resulted in non-government candidates contesting, compared with the British figure.<sup>41</sup> This suggests there was an undercurrent of resentment towards the government and the political status quo during the war, and voting alternatively allowed that resentment to be aired. Minor parties that contended against the electoral truce in Scotland tended to be focused on particularly Scottish issues or supported home rule. Any reflection in the current historiography on the way the truce was challenged in Scotland focuses very heavily on the actions of the SNP. Ewen Cameron is one of the few historians who has considered the particularly Scottish aspects of the electoral truce, such as allowing the SNP to accumulate a larger number of votes than it had previously achieved. He also believed that the party split in 1942 was a positive move in allowing the SNP to have clearer aims. This differs from the more common viewpoint that the party was weakened.<sup>42</sup> These alternative interpretations of well-known events will be discussed and analysed deeper in subsequent chapters. Cameron questions the long-term effect of wartime politics, concluding the events were a 'blip' in the political norm caused by the exceptional circumstances of the war.<sup>43</sup> However, this thesis will consider why that 'blip' occurred and if it was caused by the war or whether there were wider problems and the war has simply been accorded the blame.

### **Scotland's Forgotten By-Elections**

The subject of by-elections will complement the central focus of the thesis on the electoral truce, as by-elections demonstrate the effect the electoral truce had on political

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<sup>41</sup> Christopher Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland During the Second World War,' *The Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), pp. 921-44 at pp. 933-4. Also, Harvie made an error in his article as he said 11 out of 15 by-elections were contested in Scotland, the actual figure was 12. See Appendix A for full details.

<sup>42</sup> Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, p. 192.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

engagement. The topic of by-elections has currently received a sporadic discussion in the historiography. Paul Addison's article on by-elections of the Second World War is one of the few articles which has been dedicated to the subject.<sup>44</sup> However, while he provides an important overview, he does focus his case study examples almost entirely on English by-elections, with only a token mention of the Motherwell by-election of 1945. The lack of Scottish examples could be because there were more by-elections contested in England than in Scotland during the war, and offered a range of examples for Addison to use. Scottish by-elections of the Second World War have no study devoted to them at all and are accorded only passing mentions within volumes on Scottish politics of the period.<sup>45</sup> This has left a gap for this study to conduct a thorough and long overdue examination. The results reveal differences in the wartime political experience between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. In his study, Addison did not see independent or minor party candidates as posing a serious threat to the government, even though more by-elections were contested than uncontested. The total number of by-elections held was 141 with 75 contested, compared to 66 uncontested.<sup>46</sup> A small margin perhaps, but it was still significant that the balance moved away from the government. As will be shown in the thesis, the by-election challengers in Scotland tended to be minor party candidates rather than independents. The

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<sup>44</sup> Addison, 'By-elections', some individual by-elections have been studied by other scholars, see G.H. Bennett, 'The Wartime Political Truce and the Hopes for a post-war Coalition: The West Derbyshire By-election, 1944', *Midland History*, 17 (1992), pp. 118-35. Paul Rusiecki, 'The Maldon By-election of 1942', *The Historian*, 114 (2012) pp. 22-6. David Dutton, 'A Surfeit of Liberals: The Eddisbury By-election of April 1943', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire*, 155 (2006) pp. 121-38.

<sup>45</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, James Mitchell and Gerry Hassan (eds,) *Scottish National Party Leaders* (London, 2016).

<sup>46</sup> Addison, p. 130.

constant threat of party politics meant that 80 per cent of by-elections were contested, compared to 50 per cent in the rest of the UK.<sup>47</sup>

In his article, Addison proposed a model which considers that there were three distinct stages in the development of the by-election challenges faced by the three main parties. During the first two years, candidates were advocating anti-war or anti-conscription ideas. The middle years, 1941-3, yielded difficulties as campaigns abroad floundered and the candidates were increasingly protesting against the electoral truce, the wartime conditions and the government themselves. The final two years saw candidates who supported a more liberal or socialist programme as an anti-Conservative reaction.<sup>48</sup> The thesis will employ Addison's model as a starting point but will argue that Scottish by-election patterns do not conform to the model he proposed. The anti-truce section in particular will argue that candidates in Scottish by-elections highlighted the electoral truce as an issue far earlier than Addison's model. The anti-war section will highlight that the period where candidates entered elections on that policy was far more short-lived than in the rest of the UK where anti-war candidates still entered by-elections until 1941.

With by-elections occurring so infrequently in Scotland during the war, the nine by-elections selected for study within this thesis are an opportunity to consider the wider state of politics in Scotland. They will also provide an insight into the condition of political parties' electoral machinery. As political polling was in its infancy, and Mass Observation concentrated more on southern Britain, there are few methods available to construct an idea of public opinion towards the government and political parties in general during the war. Although the

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<sup>47</sup> Calculated by dividing the total number of by-elections contested by total number of by-elections in Scotland (12/15X100) and the number of rest of UK by-elections (without Scotland) contested (63/126 x 100) to get the percentage figures.

<sup>48</sup> Addison, pp. 130-131.

population was vastly spread out by the war and the electoral role woefully out of date, by-elections did, in a way, provide a microcosmic snapshot of Scottish public opinion at the time of the election.

### **The Pausing of Party Politics?**

The fortunes of the main political parties during wartime by-elections is discussed less in the historiography than that of minor parties or independent candidates. Obviously, the term 'government candidate' was all-encompassing, covering the Conservatives, Labour, Liberals and Liberal Nationals. However, in Scotland there is less analysis of the individual parties' performances, mainly as parties like the SNP monopolised the limelight. Ewen Cameron observes that the truce has left little to say about the performance of the main parties in elections. He noted that the Unionist party was the most self-sacrificing of all the parties and disbanded its party mechanisms on the outbreak of the war. Although as will be examined in the first two chapters, the party did eventually restore a modicum of activity, it meant that the party was weaker overall when it came to campaigning for by-elections relying solely on patriotism and the military background of candidates to secure victory.<sup>49</sup>

The Unionists experienced some difficulties with perception, as despite the coalition government, it was still considered to be the party in charge bearing the brunt of the electorate's frustration with the progress of the war. However, Cameron notes that the truce particularly hid the problems Labour experienced.<sup>50</sup> Harvie agrees that despite the Labour party's mechanisms still being in place, it struggled to function and was chronically lacking funds. That the party survived the war at all is notable.<sup>51</sup> Labour was stuck with the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 192.

<sup>50</sup> Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, pp. 192-3.

<sup>51</sup> Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland', pp. 928-9.

small number of MPs from the 1935 General Election and was most often under pressure from the minor parties contesting by-elections such as the SNP and the ILP. Again, this differs to the situation Addison described in England where the Conservative party was under pressure from independent candidates. This factor will be a focus throughout chapter four, showing that in Scotland the coalition government was the concern, and was placed under pressure by minor parties continuing to engage in party politics.

Harvie discusses the much-lauded argument that Labour's 1945 success was due to the party not disbanding its organisation, unlike the Unionists, upon the announcement of the electoral truce. Fielding noted that Thorpe's research for *Parties at War* discredited the idea that the Conservatives lost because of its patriotic self-sacrifice as all political parties experienced difficulties.<sup>52</sup> This topic will be discussed throughout the thesis, but it will receive particular emphasis in chapter five. It will argue that the Unionists actually had an advantage over the other parties in Scotland as Labour and the Liberals had far weaker organisations. This is a factor which this thesis will consider as the reason the performance of the Scottish Labour party in the 1945 general election was not as strong as the nationwide result.

The Liberal party suffers from a distinct lack of discussion in the historiography. It had far fewer MPs in Scotland than it did during the First World War, and struggled to find a position within the changing political landscape. I.G.C Hutchison has argued that the loss of support for the Liberals to both the Unionists and to the SNP due to its longstanding backing of Scottish home rule. The Liberal party was involved in some of the discussions around

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<sup>52</sup> Stephen Fielding, 'The Permanent Crisis of Party,' *Twentieth Century of British History*, 21 (2010), pp. 102-9, at p. 106.

holding a home rule plebiscite after the war. Yet it was cautious in assisting the SNP, as there was an awareness that it could lose voters to the party.<sup>53</sup> The realigning of the SNP after 1942 with its clearer agenda on self-government for Scotland did cause some Liberal supporters to switch sides. Using the 1945 general election results in Dundee as evidence, Hutchison provides figures to illustrate that around 43 per cent of Liberal cross-over voters went to the SNP.<sup>54</sup> He does however emphasise that the lack of policy coherence in the SNP did remain and that, in terms of voting figures, it was no better off post-war than pre-war. In his opinion, the support for the nationalists during the war was part of an anti-incumbent vote rather than the electorate positively endorsing the SNP.<sup>55</sup> Hutchison's observations of the shifting support within the minor parties is rather interesting as it was a time where political loyalties could be fairly static. Wartime by-elections often saw changes in voting behaviour, particularly in the middle years when the electorate became more unpredictable and voted for non-government candidates. This will be considered in chapters three and four on by-elections.

The final piece in the political map of the Second World War to consider is the Common Wealth Party, which rose as quickly to prominence in the war as it disappeared into obscurity at the end. Very little consideration has been given to this party in the historiography of Scottish wartime politics with only a token mention accorded. The most significant historian to discuss the party's legacy is Angus Calder who provided a thorough exploration in his unpublished DPhil thesis.<sup>56</sup> Calder scrutinises the party's history in minute detail covering every aspect of the party's formation, its successes and the reasons for its

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<sup>53</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 219.

<sup>54</sup> Hutchison, *Scottish politics*, p. 86.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 84-7.

<sup>56</sup> Angus Calder, *The Common Wealth Party, 1942-1945* (Unpublished DPhil Thesis, University of Sussex, 1967).

eventual decline. As his thesis is such a sizeable volume, it is difficult to succinctly summarise Calder's conclusions. However, he does note that the collapse in the Liberal Party turned the more radically minded of its middle-class voters towards the left. He observes that the Common Wealth Party managed to reach out through a prolific number of meetings and leaflets to many people who never became members, but still heard the message. He credits the party with making socialism more acceptable via these mediums.<sup>57</sup> These conclusions, however, refer almost exclusively to England where the party was far more successful in by-elections than it was in Scotland. The only by-election where a Common Wealth candidate came close to victory was the 1943 North Midlothian by-election where the Unionist candidate won by a very narrow margin.<sup>58</sup> The Common Wealth parties lack of success in Scottish by-elections in comparison to England is one of the most striking political differences of the war. It will be argued that because Scotland already had the Communists, ILP and SNP as more established parties on the left of the political spectrum, there was no place for the Common Wealth party. In England there was a vacuum left by Labour's inclusion in the coalition which was filled by the party. Several other mitigating factors relating to the Common Wealth's inability to establish itself in Scotland will be examined in chapter four of the thesis.

### **A Landslide of Epic Proportions**

The general election of 1945 is a subject matter which has been so widely discussed by a variety of historians over the past few decades, that it would seem there is little left to say

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, part 2, pp. 187-8.

<sup>58</sup> Discussed in-depth in chapter four.

on the matter.<sup>59</sup> In the historiography, it has often been claimed that the magnitude of the Labour victory was attributable to the British public shifting their political ideology to the left after the middle years of the war. Pelling has suggested that the momentum swinging towards Labour was because it had shown a willingness to enact the social reforms outlined in the Beveridge report.<sup>60</sup> Labour also benefitted from being viewed as partners in the coalition, whereas the Conservatives had technically been in office since 1935. Addison suggested that Labour adopted a policy which aligned with public opinion at that time.<sup>61</sup> Although the Conservative party had included similar promises in its manifesto to continue the social programme agreed by the coalition, the details were vague. Instead of encouraging voters to support the Conservatives, the party ran a negative, fear-based campaign against Labour. This resulted in Churchill's famous attack on Labour requiring a 'Gestapo' to enact its policies.<sup>62</sup> The response from the voters was very negative. The 'Gestapo speech' reminded the public that Churchill was still a party politician. Pelling noted that Attlee gained a lot of respect for his speech the following day, reminding voters of the difference between Churchill the war leader and Churchill the leader of the Conservatives.<sup>63</sup> For the electorate, the bubble had somewhat burst when they realised voting for Churchill meant a resumption to a Conservative and not a coalition government.

Indeed, Fielding highlighted there was strong public support for retaining the coalition government, as the public were less concerned about the need to resume party politics.

However, he remarked that when it became clear a coalition government would not

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<sup>59</sup> Henry Pelling, 'The 1945 General Election Reconsidered', *The Historical Journal*, 23 (1980), 399-414, Addison, *The Road to 1945*, Stephen Fielding, 'What Did 'The People' Want?: The Meaning of the 1945 General Election', *The Historical Journal*, 35 (1992), 623-639, at pp. 632-3.

<sup>60</sup> Pelling, p. 411.

<sup>61</sup> Addison, *The Road to 1945*, p. 264.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* p. 265.

<sup>63</sup> Pelling, p. 405.

continue, the electorate chose to place their faith in Labour as the best alternative to further Conservative rule. Yet according to Fielding's analysis, the swing to the left was not as enthusiastic as the mythologies around 1945 would appear. He stated it was simply the electorate choosing the lesser of two evils, selecting the party with the better credentials on social reform.<sup>64</sup> He believed that Labour won the election in 1945 by its welcome acceptance of the Beveridge report. The Conservatives negated any chance of winning the post-war election by needlessly arguing over minor details.<sup>65</sup> Any momentum the Conservatives had inadvertently gained through Churchill's patriotic statesmanship was lost as the attention turned from winning the war to securing the peace.

The majority of the current literature focuses on the overall picture of the general election, public attitude and the campaigning tactics employed by the main parties. The literature focuses less on parties' organisational planning for the general election. Andrew Thorpe discussed the various parties' organisational tactics in his study of wartime political party organisation, and Christopher Harvie focused on Scottish Labour's planning for the general election. The Unionist party planning for the election has elicited sporadic mentions by various historians in the literature relating to Scottish Unionism.<sup>66</sup> For the Liberals, the national level organisation has been covered by historians such as Roy Douglas and David Dutton. However, the Scottish section's planning is almost absent from the historical record.<sup>67</sup> Organisational planning for the election will therefore be a focus through the final chapter of the thesis as these details are overlooked in the historiography for all the parties

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<sup>64</sup> Fielding, 'The Meaning of 1945', pp. 632-3.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, pp. 633-4.

<sup>66</sup> D.W Urwin, 'Scottish Conservatism: A Party Organisation in Transition', *Political Studies*, 14 (1966), 145-162. Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland', p. 928. Kellas, 'The Party in Scotland', pp. 675-679.

<sup>67</sup> David Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party Since 1900* (Basingstoke, 2013). David Dutton, *Liberals in Schism: A History of the National Liberal Party* (London, 2008). Roy Douglas, *Liberals: A History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties* (London, 2005).

in Scotland. The effect of the electoral truce on political organisations would bear heavily on the way in which general election campaigns were run. The occasional wartime by-election did not allow political parties to fully exercise their organisational abilities with most in a semi-operational state. Analysis of this crucial area of activity will offer an insight into the true state of Scottish political parties.

Overall, studies which look specifically at the Scottish experience are difficult to find.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, the final chapter of this thesis will examine the general election exclusively from a Scottish perspective. Any discussion of UK-wide planning and policy are included only to compare any differences experienced in Scotland. The final chapter will not feature a re-telling of well-established facts and arguments around the nature of the general election of 1945. The reasons why it is important to consider a Scottish dimension is due to several variances in the Scottish results from the wider British trends that require a detailed examination. The reasons for the smaller swing to Labour in comparison with the rest of the UK will be explored. Similarly, why the Unionists' support held up better than anticipated. The destruction of the Scottish Liberals and the electoral fortunes of the minor parties which have been discussed throughout the thesis so far will also be examined. The impact that the culmination of the electoral truce and coalition government had in particular on the minor parties will be analysed.

### **A Consensual Political Environment?**

One of the main debates about British politics during the Second World War is whether or not the era could be considered one of 'consensus' politics. With the main political parties

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<sup>68</sup> Margaret Arnott and Catriona M.M McDonald, 'The Union and the Un-doing of Scottish Conservatism in the Twentieth Century' in David Torrance (ed.) *Whatever Happened to Tory Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2012), pp. 43-61. Cameron, *Impaled upon a Thistle*, pp. 193-7. Kellas, 'The Party in Scotland', pp. 671-96.

calling an electoral truce and then the formation of the coalition government for the duration of the war, the idea that there was consensus in wartime politics appears to be rational. However, it is a deceptively complex subject over which historians still argue. The principal advocate of the idea of a wartime consensus was Paul Addison. One of the strengths of his work is the way in which Addison charts the development of the 'middle way' opinion growing from around 1942 to 1945.<sup>69</sup> He notes that the public still saw the Conservatives as 'the government' despite the coalition.<sup>70</sup> Regardless of what the population may have thought about the wartime coalition, Addison makes it clear that he sees the war as an era of consensus politics within the government as they required commonality in order to function. However, he emphasises that party politics and activism still existed. Addison's fiercest critic, the historian Kevin Jeffreys, disagrees with him on many issues in his own examination of Churchill and the coalition government. He argues that Addison did not consider the high levels of hostility within the coalition government and the coalition parties towards each other.<sup>71</sup> In Jeffreys' opinion, the consensus within the government only extended so far, and towards the end of the war the policies they disagreed on far outweighed the policies on which they agreed. Jeffreys has argued that the Conservative party's stubbornness in implementing any type of social reform in the first two years of the coalition frustrated Labour so much that many of its MPs voted against the government in parliament.<sup>72</sup> In contrast to Addison, Jeffreys paints a picture of a far less consensual government, although he does only focus on the political sphere of Westminster. Addison considered other factors in wartime politics such as public opinion

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<sup>69</sup> Addison, *The Road to 1945*.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 154-55 & p. 113.

<sup>71</sup> Kevin Jeffreys, *The Churchill Coalition and Wartime Politics 1940-1945* (Manchester, 1998), p. 88.

<sup>72</sup> Kevin Jeffreys, 'British Politics and Social Policy during the Second World War,' *The Historical Journal*, 30, (1987), pp. 123-144 at p. 127.

and the attitude of civil servants. The methodology each employed has had an effect on their conclusions and is a cautionary tale that the evidence you choose reflects on the results you will see. It is a factor which is considered in this thesis, hence the use of a variety of different sources evidence which explore party-political activity.

An awareness of the consensus politics debate is useful when considering the co-operation between Scottish political parties and government figures. Although discussions within the historiography of Scottish politics focuses a little less on consensual politics and rather more on whether the government was becoming devolved or centralised. Much of the discussion and debate on wartime politics in Scotland has coalesced around the tenure of Thomas Johnston, Secretary of State for Scotland from 1941 to 1945. All the main Scottish political historians of the era have their opinions on Johnston as he dominates the period. Harvie provides a good insight into Thomas Johnston as both a strong Scottish Labour politician and a forceful Secretary of State.<sup>73</sup> But he was critical of his era in office. He particularly notes that Johnson was not very innovative, focusing much more on post-war problems than any improvements on contemporary issues.<sup>74</sup> He and his publicity team were very good at publicising his achievements by courting appropriate nationalist-leaning journalists in the press so that every small achievement was widely publicised and has given foundations to the myth that has built around Johnston.<sup>75</sup>

Cameron highlights Johnston's use of 'the bogey of Scottish nationalism' to encourage the Westminster government to simply rubber stamp legislation leading to a rudimentary form

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p. 931.

<sup>74</sup> Christopher Harvie, 'Labour and Scottish Government, The Age of Johnston,' in *Bulletin of Scottish Politics*, 2 (1981), pp. 1-20 at p. 17.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

of home rule.<sup>76</sup> This essentially entailed Johnston using the threat of devolution with Westminster to further centralise the management of Scottish affairs.<sup>77</sup> His creation of a council of ex-Scottish Secretaries of State from across the parties to discuss post-war Scotland shows in principle that the ideas of consensus politics were alive within Scotland. There will be consideration throughout the thesis that the idea of consensus politics was not exactly the same type of consensus employed at a UK level. General suspicion of each other was rife amongst the major and minor parties, even those involved in the coalition. The strength of party politics from the regular contested by-elections and the reluctance of Labour to campaign for Unionist coalition candidates indicated that consensus was a concept lacking traction in Scottish wartime politics.

The way language was employed by the government during the war will also be considered throughout the thesis as both the Unionists and nationalists claimed the use of patriotic jingoism to try and add authenticity to any claims made. This was especially evident from 1942 onwards when the government was under pressure in by-elections; often the government candidates would proclaim that anyone voting against them was risking national unity. Sonya Rose discusses this idea of the government equating those that supported them as being good citizens and following expectations of good behaviour. Whereas those that did not were characterised as an enemy of the government, nation and in league with the bigger enemies of the war.<sup>78</sup> This rhetoric was powerful. The widespread manipulation of patriotic language will be examined in conjunction with the topics of the

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<sup>76</sup> Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, p. 189.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* Given the prominence of Johnston in the current historiography, this thesis will not discuss him other than in passing.

<sup>78</sup> Rose, *Which People's War*, pp. 8-12.

electoral truce and by-elections as expectations were placed on the public to conform their voting behaviour in line with the demands of the wartime government.

This chapter began with both a statement and a question; all quiet on the political front?

Politicians at Westminster may well have expected that all would remain quiet in local politics while a war was being fought, especially after the electoral truce was agreed. But as will be discussed throughout this thesis, politics was anything but quiet for the duration of the Second World War in Scotland.

## Chapter One – The Making of the Electoral Truce

When war was declared on 3 September 1939, the government quickly decided that the General Election, due to be held by 1940, would need to be postponed. Open party-political competition, it was judged, would constitute an unnecessary distraction at a time of national peril. The government chief whip, David Margesson, wrote to his opposite numbers in the Labour party, Arthur Greenwood, and the Liberal party, Percy Harris, to arrange a meeting regarding the formation of an electoral truce.<sup>1</sup> This truce was designed to be limited to parliamentary by-elections and not to local or municipal elections. It would prevent electoral contest between the main parties if any parliamentary seat fell vacant for the duration of the war.

Despite the truce being a major factor in the way politics was conducted during the war, in the current historiography, very little attention has been accorded it and the consequences of its existence. Historians have tended to mention that the truce was agreed at the outset of the war, then revisit the subject as a factor for increases in government by-election losses during the middle years of the war, when the truce was 'broken' by disgruntled members of political parties.<sup>2</sup> The other context in which the truce has often been mentioned by historians is when they analyse by-election contests, as the truce allowed minor parties to contest against the official government candidate without additional challengers.

Nevertheless, what is missing not only from the historiography of Scottish politics, but

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<sup>1</sup> LPA, National Executive Committee Files (NEC) Minutes of Meeting of the Elections sub-committee, 5 September 1939.

<sup>2</sup> Please see p. 16, where I discuss in detail the prominent historians who have considered the truce in their work, but have not dwelled on the consequences of the truce for the overall operation of politics during the war.

British politics, is in-depth analysis of the effect the truce had on politics for the duration of the war.

One of the new insights that the proceeding chapters will offer to expand understanding about the way the truce affected politics, is the examination of the different terminology used by political parties to describe the truce. It will be argued that this factor has not been considered within the current historiography. The document which was signed by the chief whips of the three main political parties referred to the truce as 'the electoral truce,' because it related purely to electoral contests and not to political or party behaviour.

However, soon afterwards, the terminology used to describe the truce by the Unionist party and Liberals began to differ from the Labour party.<sup>3</sup> It began to use the terms 'political' and 'party' to describe the truce. Both of these terms suggest far greater limitations on political parties' than the term 'electoral.' Therein lies one of the issues which these chapters will discuss in detail: the problem of language. The description of the truce changed the way it was thought about and acted upon. The truce will be referred to in the chapter by each of these, quite different, terms. It will be demonstrated how they had distinctive implications for party behaviour. Part one of the chapter will present three core arguments which will attempt to explain why the truce was misunderstood by political parties, both wilfully and unwittingly, during the early years of the war.

First, while parties across the country were issued with some instructions from central party management, it was not fully understood what these meant in practice for the operation of the truce. Furthermore, this early guidance offered to constituency parties was confusing

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<sup>3</sup> The Conservative party were known in Scotland by the name the Conservative and Unionist party. For the purposes of this thesis the party will be referred to as the 'Unionists,' as this was how it was commonly known. The use of the term 'Conservatives' will refer to the national level and English side of the party.

and contradictory. Secondly, a government regulation, the Emergency Powers Act 1939, was established within weeks of the truce agreement, and caused a temporary closure of many activities including political party meetings.<sup>4</sup> It will be argued that parties conflated the essence of this regulation into the understanding of the electoral truce believing that it confined parties to 'non-political' behaviour. The poor guidance offered to constituency parties coupled with the misunderstanding of this regulation initially led to innocent misinterpretation of the agreement.

Thirdly, as the war progressed, this misinterpretation of the truce increasingly affected political party engagement, with the Liberals and the Unionists suffering the most from this problem in Scotland. However, political parties became more aware of the way the truce was being interpreted by their members and the media. Instead of correcting these assumptions, the truce became more ambiguous, creating a useful political tool to be exploited to suit the circumstances. The truce was most often used as an excuse to avoid tackling inherent party management problems.

Consideration of the way the truce affected political activity in Scotland through the prism of these core arguments may provide a sharper understanding of the operation of politics during the Second World War. It will also provide a clearer examination of the truce itself, which remains one of the most under-studied aspects of wartime politics. It is important to note that the truce was agreed at a UK level by the party leaders, meaning all branches and divisions of the main parties were expected to honour the agreement. Political activity in Scotland was affected by a decision made outside the country. Nevertheless, the way the truce operated had some unique aspects in Scotland, which will be explored in the chapters.

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<sup>4</sup> House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series (*Hansard*), 24 August 1939, vol. 351, cols. 63-90.

### **A Truce Has Been Called**

When Captain David Margesson, the shrewd chief whip who had held the role since 1931, approached his counterparts in the Labour and Liberal parties, there was little consideration about the implications of the truce beyond seeking a quick agreement.<sup>5</sup> There had been a similar truce agreed upon at the outbreak of the First World War, and had also been called between the Liberal, Conservative and Labour parties.<sup>6</sup> As the government allegedly only expected the war to last until Christmas, the truce agreement reflected the short-term outlook as it was approved only until 1 January 1915.<sup>7</sup> The truce when agreed was explicitly named the electoral truce, and it was made perfectly plain that it concerned only the non-contesting of parliamentary vacancies.

When the parties in 1939 were discussing the terms of the truce, they were guided by the truce their predecessors had signed in August 1914. A memorandum recording the meeting held by the three-party representatives on 14 September to discuss the arrangements contained the First World War electoral truce documents in the appendix notes. It was probable that these were brought to the party representatives' meeting to inform wording of the 1939 truce.<sup>8</sup> Intriguingly, the documents relating to the truce renewal from January 1915 suddenly named it the 'political truce,' rather than the 'electoral truce'. However, there was no change to the original terms which were to continue until 15 February 1915.<sup>9</sup> The problem of precise phrasing surfaced during the Second World War. As will be discussed

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Pearce, 'David (Henry) Margesson, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Margesson,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography online* (accessed 10 June 2018). <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34873>

<sup>6</sup> AJP Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1965,) p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> LPA, NEC Files, memorandum of an interview held between the principal agents of the Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Parties, 14 September 1939.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

later, one of the reasons for the interchangeable wording was the context in which the truce was being used: when it suited politicians to express political passivity in order to avoid dealing with difficult relations between the parties, the truce was often mentioned in its most limiting capacity. There was, then, a degree of instrumentality to the ambiguity.

A key difference between the two incarnations of the truce was that in February 1915, a debate was held to discuss the reasons for continuing with the truce. Once again the wording of the truce was different – ‘political’, ‘party’ and indeed ‘parliamentary’ were used instead of ‘electoral’ truce.<sup>10</sup> The main address was given by Lord Lansdowne, Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords, who stated that the parties had taken the spirit of the truce far beyond the original agreement in the spirit of patriotic duty to their country, hence the conflation of the terms.<sup>11</sup> Clearly this idea of going beyond the terms of the truce as a gesture of patriotism in the First World War set a precedent for the Second World War, which inadvertently had consequences for the operation of politics during both wars. The level of distrust and uncertainty displayed by the parties in 1939 echoed the distrust between the Liberals and Conservatives in 1915 over the confidence parties and politicians could place in each regarding the operation of a truce. It is fascinating that similar issues were experienced in both 1914-15 and 1939 in both the wording and operational scope of the truce.

One important difference to note in the terminology of the truce between the First World War and the Second, was that in the latter the truce was not given a strict time limit at the outset. The First World War truce was reviewed in January, February and July 1915. This

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<sup>10</sup> *The Scotsman*, 3 February 1915.

<sup>11</sup> House of Lords Debates, Fifth Series, (*Hansard*), 2 February 1915, Vol. 18, cols 413-20.

suggests a more cautious approach and displays uncertainty about the outcome of the war. The fact that there was no review point put in place for the truce of 1939-45 suggested that the Conservatives held a different attitude towards the operation of politics than the Liberal party did during the First World War. As John Turner has observed, the Liberal Prime minister Herbert Asquith was struggling to hold onto power, and so regular reviews of the truce were perhaps a way to ensure that the Liberal party remained united and to temper any challenges from the Conservatives.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, the Conservative party during the Second World War with its massive parliamentary majority, was able to present itself as altruistic placing country before party in order to win both the war and the support of the electorate afterwards.<sup>13</sup> As a strategy, this had worked well during the First World War and the Conservatives saw little need to change it.

In September 1939, the government reacted quickly in order to formulate the truce. By September 5, the subject had already been mentioned at the Labour party's election sub-committee. Interestingly, the first mention of the truce in the Labour party minutes is as a 'political truce', rather than an 'electoral' truce. The truce had perhaps been labelled so in the minutes because the request was coming from the Conservative party. In general, the Labour party commonly called the truce 'electoral,' but it is curious that the truce is first considered by its NEC as political and not purely electoral. The statement given in the minutes was:

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<sup>12</sup> John Turner, *British Politics and the Great War, Coalition and Conflict 1915-1918* (London, 1992) pp. 112-152.

<sup>13</sup> John Ramsden, 'Winston Churchill and the Leadership of the Conservative Party, 1940-51' *Contemporary British History*, 9, (1995), pp. 99-119, at p. 102.

To recommend that the NEC agree to a political truce on the basis that nominations should not be entered by other political parties against the nominee of the political party which holds the seat in the present parliament.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the use of the term 'political,' in practice the truce was clearly aimed at purely electoral arrangements and did not amount to a 'political' amnesty between the parties. Yet, when the matter was discussed at the NEC the following week, the truce was not mentioned as either an 'electoral' or a 'political truce'. Instead it was resolved that an agreement would be made with the Conservatives and the Liberals to not enter candidates at elections against each other. Rather intriguingly, before the truce was sent to the party leadership for final approval, the truce agreed between the whip's was referred to as a 'gentleman's agreement'. This factor perhaps imbued the truce with a requirement for the signatories to remain honourable to the agreement made. In the final ratification of the truce, the arrangement was again referred to as the 'electoral truce,' and the terms stated align with the description:

We jointly agree as representatives of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties as follows:

1. Not to nominate candidates for parliamentary vacancies that now exist, or may occur against the candidate nominated by the party holding the seat at the time of the vacancy occurring.
2. The agreement shall hold good during the war, or until determined on notice given by anyone of the three-party signatories hereto.

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<sup>14</sup> LPA, NEC Papers, minutes of the elections sub-committee, 5 September 1939.

H.G Margesson

Charles Edwards

Percy Harris<sup>15</sup>

The truce thus related strictly to parliamentary elections. The statement was concise, and this at least gave no indication of ambiguity. Therefore, the frequent issues with 'truce' misinterpretation and violation that occurred throughout the war cannot be satisfactorily explained by any ambiguity in the original agreement. While the electoral truce was agreed between the parties without the need for formal legislation, local elections were not granted the same consideration. It was agreed to postpone these elections and impose an temporary provisions bill on the matter, this was justified by the parties because it was believed to be too difficult to prevent contests by mutual agreement.<sup>16</sup> The local political system was less structured around party allegiance due to the presence of independent members, therefore political party discipline would be impossible to impose.<sup>17</sup> The need for legislation at a local level shows concern from central government around the volatility of local political contests. It suggests from the outset that party whips either believed there would be very few parliamentary contests, or that enough consensus existed between the parties over the issue of political contest that the truce would be enough.

However, there is still the question of why confusion quickly emerged amongst grassroots party members over the precise nature of the electoral truce. This first and foremost was a result of poor communication, particularly from the Conservatives and Liberals, with constituency parties resorting to their own interpretation of what activity was permissible.

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<sup>15</sup> LPA, NEC files 1939, minutes of meeting of the NEC, 27 September 1939.

<sup>16</sup> House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series (*Hansard*) 17 October 1939 vol. 352 cols.723-59

<sup>17</sup> LPA, NEC Files 1939, memorandum from J.S. Middleton to all party branches, 13 October 1939.

However, what has not been considered, even by Thorpe, was the concurrent nature of three different measures which affected political activity in the first months of the war. The Emergency Powers Act approved in August 1939 prevented public meetings and imposed heavy restrictions on normal daily activity.<sup>18</sup> Although this came a few weeks before the truce, it is easy to see why this legislation, which prevented public meetings, was soon conflated into the truce agreement by political parties, due to it preventing them from operating as normal. Then, in September 1939, the same month the truce was agreed, another restriction in the activities of political parties came from the Ministry of Information (MOI). It established 'Local Area Committees' (LACs), as a means to monitor and maintain public morale.<sup>19</sup> The idea was that all political party machinery in local areas would be concentrated upon the national effort and would work with voluntary organisations to ensure there was a real sense of localism throughout the country that could feed into the national effort.<sup>20</sup> The LACs could have been seen as yet another restriction on political parties with provisos on behaviour, restrictions and lack of freedom of expression. What quickly became apparent was political parties were failing to remember that these restrictions on political propaganda only applied during the involvement in the work of the committees themselves; it was not an edict prohibiting party activity in general. Clearly there was much confusion caused by these different agreements and legislation around which activities were allowed. In a sense the truce, the Emergency Powers Act and the LACs became conflated and caused political parties to restrict political activity.

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<sup>18</sup> House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series (*Hansard*) 24 August 1939, vol. 351, cols. 63-90.

<sup>19</sup> Iain McLaine, *The Ministry of Morale*, (London, 1979,) p. 46.

<sup>20</sup> The National Archives, London, (TNA), Ministry of Information files, INF 1/295.

### **How the Parties in Scotland Reacted to the Truce**

Scottish Labour were no exception to the other main parties in becoming confused by the various restrictions on political operations. The Scottish Executive Council (SEC) tacitly agreed with the decision to enter the truce but were hesitant over the other two measures. It was very concerned over the Emergency Powers Act, sending a resolution to the NEC that protested strongly against the 'proposed restrictions on the liberty of meetings and the exercise of democratic rights in Britain.'<sup>21</sup> Labour were more reluctant than the other parties to participate in the LACs, as the meetings were to be of a non-political nature, and consequently felt it would be unable to criticise the government.<sup>22</sup> The SEC were anxious by the lack of political activity carried out in the localities, soon blaming the truce for this situation. By early 1940 the SEC was receiving regular correspondence from local parties calling for the end of the truce due to the restrictions they believed it caused to political activity.<sup>23</sup> Eventually, the NEC realised that it needed to make the facts known to constituency branches to ensure party co-operation was maintained. The NEC sent out communications detailing a further reason for entering into the electoral truce. It explained that, by voluntarily entering into an agreement with the other parties, it prevented the necessity of legislation being introduced to bring about the same result.<sup>24</sup> The NEC was very keen to emphasise Labour's continued political independence and that it had not entered into any joint political programmes with any other parties:

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<sup>21</sup> LPA, minutes of meeting of the SEC, 30 October 1939.

<sup>22</sup> McLaine, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> LPA, minutes of meeting of the SEC, 24 February 1940.

<sup>24</sup> LPA, NEC Files 1939, memorandum sent to all branches from J.S. Middleton and G. Shepherd, 13 October 1939.

Whilst agreeing to the truce the NEC has made it clear that the party is perfectly free to carry on its normal functions as the official opposition in parliament and its general political activities in the country as occasion may demand in other words there is no “political truce”, and the “electoral truce” is subject to review.<sup>25</sup>

It is noteworthy that the statement mentioned that the truce was subject to review. The three parties together did not schedule a date to review the truce, as occurred during the First World War. Therefore, we can conclude that the Labour party itself would unilaterally review whether to remain bound by the agreement. This disclaimer may have been added to assuage the fears of constituency parties and grassroots members. The discontent displayed by party members at the annual conference about the truce will be considered below.

The reaction of the SCUA to the declaration of the truce was that ordinary party activity should be discontinued.<sup>26</sup> The party’s attitude was informed by the initial advice sent to divisional and constituency branches by CCO. However, it was quickly realised by CCO that if all associations ceased to operate except at a basic level, the party would quickly become obsolete. Therefore, Sir Douglas Hacking, the Conservative Party Chairman, sent out another communique to all branches expressing that nothing except the Junior Imperial League and the Young Britons branches should be closed down. All organisations were encouraged to co-operate fully with the MOI on the formation of LACs and strongly advised to remain active in order to carry out important war work.<sup>27</sup> The Western Division held an emergency

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<sup>25</sup> *1940 Labour Party Annual Conference Report* (London, 1940), p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh (NLS), SCUA minutes Acc. 10424/32, minutes of meeting of the Executive Committee of the Western Division, 6 September 1939.

<sup>27</sup> Bodleian Library, Oxford, The Conservative Party Archive, (CPA) Conservative Central Office Files, (CCO), 500/1/9, Douglas Hacking to Conservative Association Officers, 12 September 1939.

meeting after receiving Hacking's communication. There was a great deal of concern expressed by the branch towards the formation of the LACs with other political parties. However, the meeting concluded with a resolution that the constituency branches were to proceed as normal, as were the associations and the divisional council.<sup>28</sup>

For the SCUA Eastern Divisional Council, the strongest consideration was to ensure that the Unionist associations remained in being. It noted that the other parties, Labour in particular, were not planning on reducing political activity. The SCUA's discussions also centred around what was to happen with both the Eastern Divisional executive and the constituency associations.<sup>29</sup> There appeared to be contradictory feelings throughout the meeting; some members felt there was no need to hold meetings of the executive, as one member stated: 'political differences were for the time being in the background, thus the reason for the existence of political organisations appeared to be in abeyance.'<sup>30</sup> These opinions concur with the findings of Andrew Thorpe, who suggested the Conservatives' response of advocating a party shutdown may not have been entirely patriotic, as the party had benefitted after the First World War in portraying itself as placing the country before party.<sup>31</sup> It seemed to be following the same strategy again and hoped for the same outcome. This led to some branches, abandoning all political activity and only agreeing to maintain the branches for the purposes of social activities, war work and to raise funds for various wartime causes.<sup>32</sup> To the Unionist party, the main aim was ensuring that there was some level of national unity, and as political activity was seen as being counter-productive

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<sup>28</sup> NLS, SCUA, Acc.10424/32, minutes of meeting of the executive committee of the Western Divisional Council, 20 September 1939.

<sup>29</sup> NLS, SCUA Minutes, Acc.10424/44, minutes of an emergency meeting of the Eastern Division Executive Committee, 13 September 1939.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 156.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, pp. 158-160.

to that aim, it was quashed ruthlessly. This has been painted by the party in the post-war era as an extraordinary act of self-sacrifice, when in fact, constituency parties struggled to hold meetings due to personnel shortages and war time conditions.

However, the Eastern Divisional Council had a different view of Hacking's communication. It deliberated upon his statement that the party had to be guided by the activities of the other two parties, which were definitely in favour of keeping its associations together.<sup>33</sup> This suggested a different approach to the other SCU associations who followed initial advice on disbanding organisations from Central Office to the letter and considered political activity obsolete during this time. In a statement showing remarkable prescience, one of the Eastern Division committee members declared:

There is no doubt that immediately on the conclusion of the war there will be a general election and it would be most unfortunate if in such circumstances the Unionist association should not be ready to function.<sup>34</sup>

This statement showed foresight that other branches of the party failed to realise, that a political organisation abandoning all political activity would surely have dire consequences. The majority of branches agreed that in the case of a by-election they would reform and campaign discreetly to ensure that the government candidate was returned.<sup>35</sup> The larger branches focused on maintaining the nucleus of an organisation, but many of the party members were called up to the armed forces which resulted in a shortage of members. The cessation of Unionist operations was not observed by the other major or minor parties to anything like the same extent. As mentioned above, this was due to the Conservative and

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<sup>33</sup> Acc.10424/44, SCUA minutes of meeting, 13 September 1939.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Unionists deliberately placing 'country before party.' By playing the patriotism card in this way, it was consciously seeking to elevate itself above mundane or sectional 'party' in the eyes of the electorate.<sup>36</sup> However, as events would show, this was not always wise, as it meant the local associations became uncertain about their purpose and abandoned almost all political activity. To reduce a political party to merely social operations was an unwise decision even during a war.

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The Liberal party's reaction to the truce in many ways falls neatly between the reactions of the Labour and the Conservative parties. The Scottish Liberal Federation, which was the Scottish version of the Liberal Party Organisation, held an emergency meeting on 6 September.<sup>37</sup> Its main area of concern was not the electoral truce, but the decision of party leader Archibald Sinclair to not enter the government. Given the disaster that befell the Liberals in coalition during the First World War, it was not surprising that it was cautious about making the same mistake again. The following statement was entered in the minutes:

Dr Orr said that while we had no share in the responsibility for the present crisis, he was sure all Liberals endorsed the attitude taken by Sir Archibald Sinclair and that they were all agreed that we must show a united front at the present time. He expressed the view however that Sir Archibald Sinclair was wise in not entering the government as he could perform a better service from an independent position.

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<sup>36</sup> Thorpe, pp. 187-88.

<sup>37</sup> NLS, Acc.11765/14, Scottish Liberal Federation (SLF), minutes of an emergency meeting of office bearers of the SLF, 6 September 1939. The Scottish Liberals retained the title of Federation despite their leader, Archibald Sinclair, changing the name of the National Liberal Federation to Liberal Party Organisation.

In this instance a united front could have several implications, from a broad electoral truce, to the narrower matter of ensuring Liberal party unity (always a grave difficulty). However, given the discussions which followed during the rest of the meeting, it would suggest the latter not the former was intended by the statement. The Federation decided that it was important to send a message to Sinclair to assure him of its support. The tone of this message was complimentary, warmly praising his 'sincere and spirited leadership which we Liberals know so well is now acknowledged as a national asset of the first importance.'<sup>38</sup> Considering the relative fragility of Liberal party unity at this time, the overstated flattery was clearly intended to communicate that the Liberal party was behind its leader. Sinclair had taken over in 1935 after the disastrous general election defeat which saw the incumbent leader Herbert Samuel lose his seat.<sup>39</sup> Sinclair had long been a politician who attempted to follow Liberal principles as closely as possible, although on occasion he had struggled to reconcile his own opinions with the need for a coherent party policy. He had found maintaining party unity difficult in the late 1930s with some MPs voting against his opinions in the Munich debate and also over the Polish guarantee.<sup>40</sup> The flattering statements made by the Scottish Federation were clearly an attempt to hold together the organisation. By publicly backing Sinclair, the SLF ensured that party unity was maintained. As mentioned earlier, the Liberals' attitude towards the political situation in September 1939 straddled the midway point between the activities of the Labour and Conservative parties in both ensuring its organisation remained united and made plans to contribute productively to the war effort. A communication was sent by the party's central

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> David Dutton, 'Sir Archibald Sinclair', in Duncan Brack, Robert Ingham and Tony Little (eds,) *British Liberal Leaders* (London 2015), pp.274-6.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, pp.279-280.

organisation, telling the Federation to prepare to undertake special war work, of which further instructions would follow.<sup>41</sup> The Federation was also told to co-operate with the MOI in Scotland and to work with other political parties to establish the LACs. The ability to contribute to the war effort in some way gave encouragement to the SLF executive, but did not diminish its determination to ensure that the party continue to function. The party therefore decided to hold monthly meetings of the executive to guarantee it could contribute to important work assigned by the central office, the MOI and maintain the nucleus of the party.<sup>42</sup> Deeper considerations of the nature of the electoral truce and what it meant for the Liberals were not considered until a meeting held at the end of November 1939. One of the committee members raised the topic but referred to it as the 'political truce,' and wished to know the position of the party. The General Secretary stated that in his understanding, 'the truce applied mainly to by-elections and normal public party propaganda, but that did not mean that the Liberals should be silent or that meetings should not be held.'<sup>43</sup>

What was evident from this statement was a problem that recurred for the duration of the war, even committee members of the main political parties did not truly understand the terms of the truce. This is puzzling considering the details of the truce were circulated to party branches and a statement was made in the press that it referred only to parliamentary by-elections. As noted earlier, the terms of the truce were laid out clearly and simply. There were no hidden meanings or tenuous clauses which would lead anyone to question the exact nature of the document. However, when the truce was referred to as 'political' rather

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<sup>41</sup> NLS, Acc.11765/14, minutes of a special meeting 6 September 1939.

<sup>42</sup> NLS Acc.11765/14, minutes of meeting of the executive, 22 November 1939.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

than 'electoral', psychologically this may have altered the context of the truce and the way in which party members understood it. This was evident when the General Secretary stated that he believed the truce also applied to party propaganda, which was not mentioned at all in the truce agreement.<sup>44</sup> Again the truce agreement was conflated with the Emergency Powers Act and the LACs, both of which did interrupt or restrict normal political operations. These vague statements and ideas from party members added further to the lack of clarity over the terms of the truce. The Liberals therefore stifled political activities for absolutely no reason as the truce did not impose or demand such limitations. The secretary's comments did not assuage the fears of other members of the executive who were concerned about the peace propaganda being promoted by the Communists.<sup>45</sup> The members noted that if the party did not meet regularly, even for the purposes of maintaining morale and continuing some level of activity, then associations would cease to exist. The SLF was voicing a legitimate concern that was surely shared by members not only in the Liberal Party, but across constituency branches in all three parties.

### **An Opportunity of a Lifetime**

The formation of the electoral truce provoked a different reaction for the minor political parties than for the main parties, mainly as they were not asked to be involved. It also gave these parties something that they would possibly never have again; an opportunity. With the main parties unable to contest against each other, elections were open for the minor parties to field candidates.

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<sup>44</sup> NLS, Acc.11765/14, SLF minutes of meeting, 13 September 1939.

<sup>45</sup> NLS, Acc.11765/14, SLF minutes of meeting, 22 November 1939.

The Independent Labour Party (ILP), since disaffiliating from the Labour party in 1932, had been something of a declining force nationally. Yet, it had retained support in Scotland, especially in Glasgow, the west coast and industrial areas. The party also had three members of parliament: James Maxton, John McGovern and Campbell Stephen all drawn from Glasgow constituencies.<sup>46</sup> The ILP was never likely to be included in the electoral truce given its support of the Unity Campaign formed in 1937 against the policies of the Chamberlain government.<sup>47</sup> The ILP was initially more concerned with the proposed 'industrial truce', which it believed was an infringement of workers' rights.<sup>48</sup> A statement was issued in late August 1939 which declared that the party would not support any capitalist government.<sup>49</sup> In Scotland there was an additional sense of reluctance about becoming involved in an 'English' war, this interpretation was driven by the ILP's long flirtation with Scottish nationalism. While home rule was not a central aim of the Scottish ILP, a lingering sympathy for the cause still existed within the party.<sup>50</sup> The ILP positioned itself as an anti-war party and formed an alliance with both the Anti-Conscription League and peace movement. This immediately gave it an advantage as members of the Labour party who were anti-war or anti-conscription could lend their support to the party. Unlike the main parties, the minor parties and the ILP in particular increased propaganda and political activity. As Angus Calder argues, the ILP's virtual pacifism did not hinder it from gaining additional members or make its electoral candidates unappealing.<sup>51</sup> There were no

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<sup>46</sup> Angus Calder, *Myth of the Blitz* (London, 1992,) p. 71.

<sup>47</sup> Nina Fishman, *The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions 1933-1945* (Aldershot, 1995), p. 228.

<sup>48</sup> See for more information, John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, 'The Last Chance Saloon? The Independent Labour Party and Miners Militancy in the Second World War Revisited.' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 46, 4 (2011) pp. 871-896.

<sup>49</sup> *The Scotsman*, 28 August 1939.

<sup>50</sup> See Ian Wood, 'The ILP and the Scottish National Question', in David James, Tony Jowitt & Keith Laybourn, (eds,) *Centennial History of the Independent Labour Party: A Collection of Essays*. (Halifax, 1992) pp. 63-74.

<sup>51</sup> Calder, p.72.

self-imposed sacrifices being made to satisfy fellow truce partners, and the ILP maintained the freedom to operate as normal.

The Scottish Socialist Party retained an even smaller membership than the ILP, but it was unrestrained in voicing discontent with the electoral truce. It fiercely criticised the Labour Party for agreeing to participate in the truce. The party was formed in 1932 by disaffected members of the ILP who opposed disaffiliating from the Labour Party.<sup>52</sup> When these members were subsequently expelled from the ILP, as a result of forming this group, they established the Scottish Socialist Party which was quickly granted affiliation with the Labour Party.<sup>53</sup> The party maintained a strongly pacifist streak and was not openly supportive of war. At the annual conference in Glasgow in November 1939, chairman Patrick Dollan, who was Lord Provost of Glasgow, called upon the Labour party to terminate the truce agreement with the government. The party considered the truce agreement to be a betrayal of democracy.<sup>54</sup> This anti-democracy argument was often used by the minor parties as a reason for opposing the truce and contesting by-elections. By highlighting that the truce was preventing the public from exercising their democratic right to vote freely, minor parties hoped that they could persuade the public against supporting the government. The left-leaning parties were particularly skilful at this argument, and it was one that did resonate with grassroots members. Perhaps this was another reason the truce began to be referred to as 'political,' as it affected the normal operation of politics and was increasingly seen as a restrictive measure.

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<sup>52</sup> James Jupp, *The Radical Left in Britain, 1931-1941* (London, 1982,) pp. 34-5.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53-4.

<sup>54</sup> *The Scotsman*, 27 November 1939.

The Scottish National Party was in a particular quandary at the outbreak of the war as it had vowed during the late 1930s that it would not fight a war because it disagreed with the appeasement policies of the Chamberlain government. It had also expostulated that unless Scotland was given some semblance of home rule, members would refuse to fight.<sup>55</sup> However, this idea had to be dropped when war was declared as the SNP was in a precarious position. If it continued to maintain a stance against the government, there was a strong likelihood of the party being forced into shutdown under the rules of the Emergency Powers Act. Unfortunately for the leadership, there was a strongly pacifist and anti-conscription branch of the membership who felt abandoned by the leadership when they declared their support for the war.<sup>56</sup> During the period where political activity was on hold, the SNP faced a perilous position. As a fairly new party, only formed in 1934 and one which was maintaining unity by a thread, any prolonged period of non-political activity threatened to render the party obsolete.<sup>57</sup> Like all the minor parties in Scotland, there was no invitation to sign the truce, nor would it have accepted if the offer had been forthcoming due to the SNP's dislike of the Chamberlain government. However, as mentioned earlier, the truce offered the SNP the chance to contest elections against the government with far less competition. The SNP also had the advantage that it might gain disgruntled home-rule-leaning Liberal and Labour supporters who may not want to vote for a Unionist candidate even in the event of war.

One major issue facing the party was a fairly weak financial position which left it unable to exploit the opportunity the truce created in the first few months of the war.<sup>58</sup> The party

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<sup>55</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 206.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

suffered a dilemma in both trying to reassure the wider Scottish public that it supported the war, but also to placate party members who advocated peace. This problem took attention away from political and electoral activity which would have been more beneficial to achieve the party aims of furthering the cause of home rule. The party secretary, John MacCormick, sent out a communication to all SNP branches on 19 September 1939 stating:

The council's policy in these times is guided by the belief that at the end of this war a great opportunity will be afforded to Scottish nationalists. It is therefore vitally important that the party shall carry on its work in the meantime increase its influence on Scottish opinion and prepare itself with the full consciousness of the responsibilities that may yet fall upon it.<sup>59</sup>

This communication showed clearly the SNP attempting to grasp the opportunity it had been given by the war. However, it also stressed that members should co-operate with the government and should, depending on their personal views, take as full a part as possible in all civil and defence duties.<sup>60</sup> This was essentially a proviso excusing non-supporters of the war, it indicated that the leadership would not punish anyone who did not concur with the wider party line. For the remainder of 1939, the SNP's position remained muddled. It satisfied neither its pro or anti-war supporters, and gave no clarity on whether the party intended to contest elections.

The Communist party during the 1930s was the driving force behind the movement to create a 'popular front' regime to rival the National Government. Yet it was torn over the approach of war.<sup>61</sup> The Communist party's eventual reaction both to the declaration of war

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<sup>59</sup> NLS Acc.3721, Box 99, folder 151, letter sent from J.M. McCormick to all branches 19 September 1939.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> John Callahan and Ben Harker, *British Communism, A Documentary History* (Manchester, 2011,) p. 145.

and to the formation of the electoral truce is particularly interesting given the major reversal performed by the party's ruling body in October 1939. The General Secretary of the party, Harry Pollitt, was very much in favour of the war and declared support for it.<sup>62</sup> The truce was not a major concern for the Communist party as it initially advocated the formation of a National Government which would render obsolete the need for parties to compete in elections.<sup>63</sup> It released a statement declaring that:

We are in support of all necessary measures to secure the victory of democracy over fascism, but fascism will not be defeated by the Chamberlain government.<sup>64</sup>

The supportive statements continued to be published in the *Daily Worker* for most of September, with the emphasis on the securing of democratic freedom from the working classes and the defeat of fascism.<sup>65</sup> The electoral truce was not mentioned, which, given the Communists' determination to ensure democracy for all, was surprising. For other left-wing parties, the lack of democratic freedom the truce gave to the electorate was a concern. The Communists' ideas on democratic engagement looked beyond the truce and focused on the composition of the government as the vital element.

However, the party's line changed dramatically after communication was received from the Comintern in Moscow. Russia had signed a non-aggression pact with Germany and all Communist international branches were required to support this policy. This led to a dramatic change in party policy.<sup>66</sup> It was declared that the war was an imperialistic battle between Britain, France and Germany to see which was the superior power.<sup>67</sup> Thereafter

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 146.

<sup>63</sup> Calder, *Myth of the Blitz*, p. 81.

<sup>64</sup> *Daily Worker*, 2 September 1939.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, pp. 81-82.

<sup>67</sup> Laybourn & Murphy, *Under the Red Flag*, p. 105-6.

the party became far more critical of the government, and still advocated the formation of a people's government with those involved in the Munich agreement to be removed from office.<sup>68</sup> The party were obligated to be very careful regarding the conduct of its propaganda, as the Emergency Powers act made provision to close down the operations of anyone who was spreading subversive propaganda. A quote from the *Edinburgh Evening News* declared that 'as long as they continued in their present standard of conduct, they would be afforded the same freedom as all other political parties.'<sup>69</sup> The Communists' abrupt policy change meant that, like the ILP, it became an anti-war party free to disregard the truce and enter candidates in by-elections. However, the party was placed at a disadvantage with its inconsistent policy decisions.

The initial reactions from both the major and minor parties showed that despite issues which were important to each party individually, they all shared similar anxieties. All parties were concerned with how well they would be able to function with the truce in operation, whether they adhered to it or not. The minor parties, while having individual differences, were concerned about what effect the Emergency Powers Act would have on ability of their political parties to hold meetings. There was also concerns throughout the minor parties whether the truce would have a positive or negative impact in their electoral ambitions. However, within most parties there were issues over the conflation of the truce with the Emergency Powers Act and the LACs. When these assumptions made about the nature of the truce were not corrected, they would quickly change into long-term misinterpretation

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 2 October 1939.

over the precise nature of the truce. Across all parties this new edict on electoral behaviour soon risked the continuation of party politics as a whole.

### **The Truce in Operation, 1940-41.**

The electoral truce managed to survive the first few months of war. However, as the war progressed the truce agreement became increasingly precarious. The political turmoil of April and May 1940 saw Neville Chamberlain resign as Prime Minister and a coalition government was formed under Winston Churchill. Yet, no amendment was made to the truce agreement, despite the inevitable closer relationships that would be formed with the three main parties uniting into one government. The truce agreement from September 1939 remained without any alterations. This section of the chapter will examine the effect the truce had upon each political party in turn during 1940-1941, beginning with the Unionist party.

After the initial complicated and confused reaction to the truce from the Scottish Unionist Associations, the party had decided to try and maintain a nucleus of an organisation. This was difficult as quite a few associations had almost ceased to function as political organisations. Instead, its function became social and focused on assisting the war effort. As political organisations, some of the constituency branches did not consider it worthwhile to continue to function. For example, the Pollok Unionist association held a meeting on 4 September, before any communication from Hacking or the Western Division was received, and decided it would suspend any further meetings indefinitely.<sup>70</sup> There was an almost identical reaction from the Bridgeton Unionist association. However, it had actually received the communication from the Western Division about the need to keep the party

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<sup>70</sup> NLS. Acc. 11361/56, Pollok Unionist Association, minutes of meeting held 4 September 1939.

functioning, which it promptly ignored. Instead, 'after a full and lengthy discussion it was agreed to instruct the secretary to take steps to wind up the associations affairs so far as possible by the end of the month.'<sup>71</sup> This was exactly the action the Western Division wished the association to avoid.

Even the larger associations, such as the Western and Eastern Divisional councils and executives, found constant effort was required to maintain branches. However, the divisions were fairly active, and until May 1940 the Western Division council managed to meet at least monthly. The Eastern Divisional Council was not quite as proactive in meeting during the first few months. It met on 13 September to discuss the declaration of war, the truce and the way forward, then did not meet again until January 1940.<sup>72</sup> This is especially noteworthy considering that the Eastern Division was very vocal about the importance of keeping the organisation together and ensuring the party continued to function despite the truce. There was a thought-provoking point raised by one of the council members that from a political perspective it was desirable even in the course of war to maintain the party organisation, stating:

While the socialists were supporting the government in the waging of the war they were definitely keeping themselves as an opposition and might quite well change their present attitude in the future.<sup>73</sup>

Several other party members noted that Labour was still holding meetings under the auspices of the party, and that 'all recent utterances pointed to their carrying on of the class

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<sup>71</sup> NLS, Acc.11368/50, minutes of special meeting, central executive committee called to consider communication from western divisional council concerning action to be taken by our association during the war emergency, 19 September 1939.

<sup>72</sup> NLS, SCUA, Western Divisional Council, Acc.10424/32 and Eastern Divisional Council, Acc. 10424/44.

<sup>73</sup> NLS, SCUA, Acc.10424/49, minutes of meeting of an emergency meeting of the executive committee, 13 September 1939.

warfare.<sup>74</sup> These factors would make it difficult for the Unionists to decide on the way forward for the party. The conflicting communications it had received from party headquarters after the truce was announced provided no clear guidance. Compared to divisional branches in England, the Scottish Unionists had a little more autonomy in deciding its course of actions, but it was ultimately expected to toe the party line. The SCUA also had to consider the attitudes of members. It was noted that subscribers were more likely to continue to support the party if they were told of the necessary work the party was carrying out.<sup>75</sup> Without the formulation of a clear policy it was difficult to see how members could continue to support and invest in a political party that was unable to perform the functions it was set up to achieve. That being said, the division sent out memoranda to its constituency branches, informing them that they should attempt to keep branches together, and utilise them to undertake a scheme of national service which was devoid of political activity.<sup>76</sup> The SCUA unfortunately did not specify exactly what would make these tasks devoid of political activity. However, one can assume the branches would try and rally local communities under the auspices of the war effort rather than emphasise that they were the Unionist party.

This clearly indicated that the Unionists suffered from the same issues as the Labour and Liberal parties in being unsure of the precise nature of the 'truce,' and what it was permitted to do in terms of keeping its party machinery together. The Western Division, however, were determined to keep the Unionist organisation as close as possible to its pre-war status. Throughout 1940, there were frequent resolutions and recommendations made

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> NLS Acc.10424/49, minutes of Eastern Divisional Council committee, 13 September 1939.

by the executive committee of the Eastern and Western Divisions to the government that it should consider utilising the Unionist associations for the purpose of war work.<sup>77</sup> The truce was frequently mentioned and was always referred to as the 'political truce' or the 'party truce', never the 'electoral truce'. Therein lies the issue; the Unionists were considering the truce in a much wider scope than the actual document allowed for. On one occasion the Labour party was referred to as 'having a narrow interpretation of the political truce and that this was a warning that the Unionists could not afford to neglect.'<sup>78</sup> It was not entirely clear what the Unionists considered to be this 'narrow interpretation.' One possible explanation was that it considered that the Labour party was sticking only to the letter of the truce, but that the Unionists were acting in an honourable fashion, going above and beyond the terms of the agreement. It seemed a rather ironic stand from the Unionists, criticising Labour for staying within the agreed lines of the truce, while it placed extra unnecessary restrictions on itself and wanted Labour to do the same. The roots of frustration from the Unionists over what it was prepared to do as an organisation for the sake of national unity was clearly evident here. John Ramsden argues that at Conservative Party Headquarters there was a definite awareness that its interpretation of the truce was more restrictive than that of the Labour party. However, it was accepted as an essential part of national unity.<sup>79</sup> Whether the reasons for this stance were fully articulated to constituency branches was unclear.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid and Acc.10424/49, various minutes of executive council meetings for 1940.

<sup>78</sup> NLS Acc.10424/32, minutes of meeting of the Western Divisional Unionist Council, 10 January 1940.

<sup>79</sup> Ramsden, 'Churchill and the Leadership', p. 102. Ramsden has used the Whip's papers from the Conservative Party Archive to form this conclusion as there are several files solely dedicated to 'the party truce.' However, access to these papers is at the discretion of the current Conservative party Chief Whip who has declined all access requests to these files.

This uncertainty about the function of the associations and what type of activity the party was able to undertake did not cease for the duration of 1940. Indeed, they increased when the coalition government was formed. There was an assumption that the Labour and Liberal parties would fall in line and conform with the Unionists' ideas on the truce. These assumptions caused a dilemma which raised questions over its function and intention as a party. From a Glasgow Unionists Association report of 1940, several of the divisional branches all mentioned that political activities had ceased, but that the branches were still in operation.<sup>80</sup> The Springburn branch reported, 'owing to the political truce and the suspension of political activities consequently upon the war your office bearers concentrated their attention on maintaining the organisation.'<sup>81</sup> This statement concurs with the point made earlier about the conflation of the truce and the actions required from the Emergency Powers Act which closed down most public activity for the first few weeks of the war. Evidently the Unionists believed the Emergency Powers Act and the truce were mutually exclusive and led them to place greater restrictions than was necessary on political operations as it believed that this was the behaviour expected during a time of crisis.

This then begs the question, without political activity what was the function of the party? The Liberals faced a similar scenario as, in the first instance, it obeyed a non-stated part of the truce and undertook a complete political party shutdown. However, what was the point of being a member of a political party that was unable to take political action or had any political function? In this instance the Unionist party appeared to be sustained by pure social function only. While this technically kept the organisations together, it also increased resentment towards the truce as it was seen as causing political parties to descend into

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<sup>80</sup> NLS Acc.10424/27 viii, Glasgow Unionist Association Annual Reports for 1940.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

obscurity.<sup>82</sup> The Unionists were making a sacrifice for national unity, but hoped to recoup those losses later by highlighting the great sacrifice made by the party in the national interest. However, the resentment continued to bubble from the Unionists as it felt Labour and the Liberals were not following its lead.

### **'There is no "Political" Truce'**

Labour's co-operation in the electoral truce was tested just a few months after the agreement was made. By December 1939, antipathy towards the truce was expressed by many Labour party members and affiliated trade unions. There was confusion over the nature of the truce because of the co-operation between Labour and the Conservatives in the MOI LACs and the occasions where party politics were to be curbed.<sup>83</sup> The elections sub-committee of Labour's NEC received complaints about the truce. After careful assessment, it recommended to the NEC that it should not cancel the truce, the resolution stated:

No matter of sufficient importance had arisen to render a reversal of the party's adherence to the electoral truce necessary. The National Executive be recommended, whilst keeping its mind on the alert, not to seek the cancellation of the agreement reached between the three main parties at this juncture.<sup>84</sup>

At the NEC meeting held the following week, the sub-committee's recommendation was debated and when put to the vote, the NEC agreed to maintain the truce by 17 votes to 5. Afterwards, the NEC sent a circular to all party organisers explaining the reasons for the truce's continuation.<sup>85</sup> The fact that Labour was required to have this debate so early into

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, as stated above both the Springburn and Gorbals branches opened their reports with the phrase 'owing to the Political Truce.'

<sup>83</sup> Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (London, 1986,) p. 186.

<sup>84</sup> LPA, NEC Files, minutes of the elections sub-committee, 12 December 1939.

<sup>85</sup> LPA, minutes of the NEC, 20 December 1939.

the truce arrangement was the first sign that further problems with the truce were likely. It showed how difficult it was for party members not only to understand exactly what political behaviour was allowed within the scope of the truce, but the need to co-operate with the Conservative party. The attempt to break the truce by members and unions had failed, although, it alerted the party to the unease being experienced at branch level.

In February 1940 there was another indication that some of the affiliated parties and grassroots membership of the party were unhappy with the nature of the truce. At a joint meeting of the Scottish Co-Operative and Labour parties, a resolution was passed declaring that the Co-Operative party was against all forms of collaboration with the government, and encouraged the Labour Party to end the political truce and resume levels of normal party campaigning across the country.<sup>86</sup> Although the attendees by majority rejected this resolution, the chairman then stated that there was not a 'political truce.'<sup>87</sup> It was not made clear in the minutes exactly what was meant by this statement. However, one can deduce that the chairman was trying to reassure the committee that despite the Co-Operative parties' thoughts on the truce, a 'political truce' did not exist. Clearly the Scottish Labour party was as concerned as the Unionist party that the truce was preventing normal political circumstances to operate. The report of the Scottish Labour conference of 1940 contained a fascinating passage which indicated that Scottish Labour's support for the government and the strategies outlined by the NEC did not entirely correspond:

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<sup>86</sup> LPA, minutes of meeting of the SEC, 24 February 1940.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

Scottish Labour has no fifth column psychology ...we do not merely support the government, we urge the government to greater efforts claiming the right of constructive criticism when weaknesses are apparent.<sup>88</sup>

The dual concerns of pacifist-leaning members and Communist infiltration were both factors which may have prompted this statement. It was a reassurance that these were a minority within the Scottish Labour movement. However, Scottish Labour clearly outlined that the need for the party to remain critical of the government was necessary to maintain a robust democracy. The Scottish Labour executive had previously released statements referring to the government eroding democratic freedom, it is evidence of the psychological deficit regional branches of political parties were experiencing under the dual confines of the coalition and electoral truce. Proclaiming the right to criticise the government in those austere times was a way for Scottish Labour to maintain a political purpose.

More evidence of this can be seen from the reactions of grassroots members at Labour's annual conference in 1940. It was the first opportunity offered to the party at large to discuss and consider the electoral truce. This conference was also held during the tensest period of 1940 in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Norway, Denmark and Holland and the formation of the coalition government. At the beginning of the annual conference report, reference is made to the truce – and particularly to the language and interchangeable terminology used when talking about the truce. The conference report stated:

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<sup>88</sup> LPA, SEC Files, Scottish Council of the Labour Party, Report of the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference held 21 September 1940.

Whilst agreeing to the truce, the NEC has made it clear that the party is perfectly able to carry on its normal functions as the official opposition in parliament and its general political activities in the country as occasion may demand. In other words there is no political truce and the electoral truce is subject to review.<sup>89</sup>

The Labour party clearly defined for its members and the wider public its understanding of what the electoral truce meant in practice; that it was purely referring to the document that had been agreed and nothing beyond that. This directly contrasted with the Conservatives and Liberals who did not offer their members such a clear definition. The Labour party's strategy in dealing with the electoral truce has come under heavy scrutiny by historians. Stephen Brooke is particularly critical of what he perceives to be a lack of direction and the formation of a cohesive policy. The truce, he believes, undermined Labour's ability to operate effectively as the opposition and meant the party had to rely on factors outside its control, such as internal divisions in the Conservative party, to allow an opportunity for action.<sup>90</sup> Robert Crowcroft takes the opposite viewpoint in that Labour was playing a waiting game and Attlee in particular positioned the truce as being something the Labour party was required to participate in, not by choice, but because it was necessary to ensure the party would not be involved in a coalition with the Chamberlain government.<sup>91</sup> This idea of power without responsibility actually gave the Labour party a great deal of leverage and allowed it to tread the fine line between favourable public opinion and maintaining party members' approval.

The sheer number of resolutions submitted to the annual conference in 1940 on the subject

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<sup>89</sup> *1940 Annual Conference Report*, p. 19

<sup>90</sup> Brooke, *Labour's war*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>91</sup> Crowcroft, *Attlee's War*, pp. 29-30.

of the electoral truce showed what a contentious subject it was within the party.<sup>92</sup> One quarter of all resolutions were critical of the policy. There were expressions from district Labour party representatives on both tacit approval of the truce because of the circumstances of war, and outright opposition. Several delegates felt cheated by the fact that the coalition agreement had come into force a few days earlier, effectively denying them the right to fully discuss or give a clear position on their feelings towards the truce. This view was especially emphasised by the representative from the Central Edinburgh branch who remarked that recent events had made discussion of the truce impossible.<sup>93</sup> There were several other delegates who stated that their support for the truce would have ceased if Chamberlain's government had not already fallen. They felt that the truce would struggle to remain in operation given the levels of discontent amongst Labour's grassroots members.<sup>94</sup>

There are not often comparisons drawn between the formation of the coalition governments of the First and Second World Wars and the way in which this affected politics and political engagement. However, it is worth a brief moment to consider the similarities. On both occasions the coalition was formed to prevent the two leading parties from dealing with a variety of internal issues. In the First World War both the Liberal and the Conservative leaders, Asquith and Bonar Law, were fighting against losing control of their parties.<sup>95</sup> During the Second World War, for the Conservatives it was preventing the failure of Chamberlain and the 'guilty men of Munich' from a complete collapse of parliamentary confidence. For Labour, it was a possibility that the rank and file would vote it out of the

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<sup>92</sup> *Annual Conference Report of the Labour party 1940*, pp. 141-44.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, p. 142.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>95</sup> Turner, *British Politics and the Great War*, p. 61.

electoral truce agreement. The inter-relationship between the formation of the coalition and what it meant for the truce, however, are different. In the First World War, the wrangling between the leaders and the breakdown of Asquith's coalition had far more of an impact on the operation of politics than the truce did.<sup>96</sup> Whereas the relative strength of the Second World War coalition under Churchill's forceful personality meant that most of the trouble in the political landscape came from outside the centre of government and was stirred up at a local level and during by-elections. There is not the scope within this particular study for a full and detailed discussion of this topic, however it is an interesting avenue for further study.

Once Labour were part of the coalition, the discontent with the truce did not cease for the remainder of 1940 and continued into 1941. By being a part of the government, Labour became even more accountable for upholding the unspoken agreement in the electoral truce relating to open party propaganda and overt party statements. In Scotland, party members were particularly outspoken and, on occasion, made things very difficult for the central party management. One of the most well-known truce-breaking incidents of the war occurred within the King's Norton by-election of May 1941 where the local Labour party were disaffiliated for suggesting that its members and other Labour voters should abstain from voting in the election rather than voting Conservative.<sup>97</sup> This was seen as one of the moments that eventually led to the three main parties working as closely as possible in by-elections without losing their independent party stance. This is something that most historians who study politics in this period have mentioned.<sup>98</sup> However, what is not

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, pp. 94-101.

<sup>97</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 201.

<sup>98</sup> Thorpe *Parties at War*, p. 41, Crowcroft, *Attlee's War*, p.113, Addison, *The Road to 1945*, p.226.

discussed in the literature is that Scotland had a similar incident which occurred at the end of 1940. The incident showed that truce-breaking did not only occur in a Scottish context, but that it could potentially be more dangerous due to the strength of the Communist movement.

In November 1940, the Dundee Labour party cancelled the proposed parliamentary candidature of Krishna Menon due to his links with the Communist party and Communist sympathetic wings of the Labour party. The charge against him was that he had contributed an article to the *Daily Worker* and also spoke at a conference convened by *Labour Monthly* which featured the Communist MP Willie Gallacher as a speaker.<sup>99</sup> It meant that he featured alongside Gallacher on a poster advertising the conference.<sup>100</sup> This was especially frowned upon by the SEC as it was keen to minimise any links to Communism. The SEC had established very clear rules against any form of affiliation or association with the Communist party, regardless of how minor or incidental that association may have been.<sup>101</sup> Menon maintained that the article focused on his work on India and was in no way supporting the aims of the Communists, and he claimed he was unaware that Gallacher would be making a speech.<sup>102</sup> The Dundee Labour party in the 1930s had struggled with Communist infiltration and acted fast to extinguish any issues, quickly cancelling Menon's candidature.<sup>103</sup> It acted too rashly and did not follow party procedure or allow Menon to argue his case, which gave him recourse to appeal the decision to the NEC. The NEC, perhaps conscious of the appearance of Communist influence in the party and to minimise any ambiguity, upheld the

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<sup>99</sup> The title of the journal gives the impression of being an official Labour publication; it was in fact edited by prominent Communist Party Member R. Palmer Dutt. For more details, see J.D. Playford, 'Labour Monthly 1921-1962,' *Labour History*, 5 (1963), pp. 57-59.

<sup>100</sup> LPA, NEC files, minutes of special meeting of NEC, 29 November 1940.

<sup>101</sup> Gordon Pentland (ed.) *The Autobiography of Arthur Woodburn (1890-1978)* (Woodbridge 2017), pp. 78-9

<sup>102</sup> LPA, NEC meeting, 29 November 1940.

<sup>103</sup> Pentland, *Autobiography of Arthur Woodburn*, p. 79.

Dundee party's decision to cancel Menon's candidature. As the coalition was still in its first six months, it was not surprising that the Labour party were quick and ruthless to quash any potential threat to the truce and to prevent negative press reaction. The Menon episode was just one of several incidents in the first few years of the war where the Scottish branch of the party were forced to deal with subversive and potential truce-breaking occurrences.

Another example was during the Glasgow Pollok by-election of 30 April 1940. On the eve of the coalition agreement, a member of the DLP, John Nicolson, stood as an 'independent Labour candidate,' which was a direct contravention of the electoral truce.<sup>104</sup> Some members of the branch also campaigned for the candidate while still remaining party members. The SEC took a firm line on this matter. During a committee meeting at the end of May, it resolved to meet with the disaffected groups and ask them to adhere to the party constitution or submit their resignations. It was seen as vital that the party maintain unity and show that Labour were seriously committed to the truce, and deal with these problems swiftly and strictly. Many of the truce-breaking incidents of 1940-41 were centred around the Glasgow area. There, several members were expelled from the Cowcaddens and Paisley branches for chalking Communist slogans in the street to advertise a meeting, and speaking in support of Annie Maxton, the ILP candidate in the East Renfrewshire by-election.<sup>105</sup>

Although these were fairly minor instances, the executive was not impressed. The Communist affiliate was expelled from the party and the ILP supporter was let off with a warning.<sup>106</sup> This showed the Labour party was more concerned about Communist infiltration than supporters backing the ILP. Any relations with the Communists could have threatened

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<sup>104</sup> LPA, Minutes of meeting of the SEC, 31 May 1940.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

Labour's place both within the coalition, and the truce agreement. Hence the determination to minimise any links with the organisation.

These occurrences were a violation of the 'informal truce' or the truce which many politicians were naming the 'political' or 'party' truce, which dissuaded members of the three main parties from campaigning against the official government candidate. Formally, the truce made no provisions that party members should advocate political neutrality, or refrain from campaigning against the government. The truce simply stated that a candidate would not be nominated against the incumbent party holding the seat. The fact that no provision was made for this potential problem in the truce showed the hasty way it was completed, and that it never occurred to the chief whips to regulate the behaviour of their party members. Theoretically, this allowed government candidates to declare their support for a non-government candidate in a by-election. Although not in the agreement, this contradicted the 'spirit of the truce', a point which is key to explaining the conflicting problems of political loyalties in this era. There is some contemporary evidence that the idea of acting within the 'spirit of the truce' existed. A small column piece from the *Nottinghamshire Gazette* of 1941 mentioned that the Liberals were to hold a tribute lunch to Harcourt Johnston and Lord Meston for their service to the party. In the article the writer quips:

Of all the political parties, the Liberals have observed the spirit of the truce the most so that if the speeches take on a party flavour nobody can complain.<sup>107</sup>

This suggests the behaviour associated with maintaining the 'spirit of the truce' was increasingly associated with the actual truce, thus prohibiting any party or political related

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<sup>107</sup> *Nottingham Journal*, 18 March 1941.

behaviour. It meant that contravening this expectation was also viewed as ‘breaking’ the truce agreement. The result was a change in the language used to describe the truce with ever more restricted parameters being applied to the agreement.

### **The Liberals and the Language of the Truce**

By January 1940, the Liberal party faced difficult political circumstances with the truce increasingly causing a negative effect upon the party. The initial communications sent from party headquarters after the declaration of war implied to the SLF that it would be given some work of national importance by the government. However, this special work never materialised and caused the party huge disappointment.<sup>108</sup> The virtual shutdown experienced by all the political parties affected the Liberals slightly more than Labour and the Unionists, mainly as it had fewer branches and was already in a financially precarious position before the outbreak of war.

In terms of truce-breaking incidents, the Liberals had very few issues. The most noteworthy event where the party almost broke the truce was during the Argyll by-election of April 1940. The local party considered joining forces with the SNP, and fielding JM Bannerman as an Independent home rule candidate in an attempt to circumvent the electoral truce.<sup>109</sup> The Liberals had good reason to consider contesting as it was not a safe Unionist seat, and in the 1935 general election the Liberals had only lost the seat by 1774 votes.<sup>110</sup> However, there were concerns about being associated with some of the extreme members of the SNP, plus a sense of duty to the terms agreed by Sinclair in the electoral truce were considered. The party would have technically broken the electoral truce as Bannerman was a prospective Liberal

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<sup>108</sup> NLS, Acc.11765/14, minutes of meeting of the SLF Executive Committee, 20 December 1939.

<sup>109</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 214.

<sup>110</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 614.

parliamentary candidate. It was exactly the scenario that occurred a few weeks later at the Pollok by-election. The chairman of the district Liberal party gave a statement encouraging Liberal voters that it was their patriotic duty to support the government and Unionist candidate and that the party would be adhering to the truce.<sup>111</sup>

The Liberals were aware of the problems it was facing as a political organisation, although efforts to revive matters were, at best, halting. In June 1940, Liberal head office sent out communications encouraging organisations to stay together as much as possible without publishing active propaganda.<sup>112</sup> This indicated that the LPO still believed the truce required no engagement in normal political activities, but this had been a requirement of the LACs which the LPO seem to have incorporated into its understanding of the truce. Matters were further complicated by the Liberals joining the coalition government in May 1940 and the party leader Sinclair, who was close to Churchill, assumed the difficult role of air minister. The Liberals' interpretation of the truce had already restricted political activities, becoming part of the coalition government further inhibited its recovery.

The SLF were, however, fortunate in having the resourceful and determined Lady Louise Glen-Coats for a member; a wealthy aristocrat who refused to allow the party to become obsolete.<sup>113</sup> Lady Glen-Coats had felt it would be a great pity to drop all political activity. She noted that the other two parties were only observing the 'party truce' to a certain extent. They were not holding politically motivated public meetings, but political work still continued. She felt she could carry out useful work in travelling the country as a sort of liaison between

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<sup>111</sup> *The Scotsman*, 6 April 1940.

<sup>112</sup> Acc.11765/14, minutes of SLF executive, 12 June 1940.

<sup>113</sup> No formal biography exists for Louise Glen-Coats, she appears mostly as the wife of Sir Thomas Glen-Coats, for example, The Peerage website, <http://www.thepeerage.com/p23449.htm> (accessed 06-02-2019).

the Federation and the constituencies.<sup>114</sup> Once again, it was notable that when the truce caused issues with the party structure and management it was referred to as the 'party truce' and not the 'electoral truce'. This highlights why the language of the truce was so important. When the truce was referred to as a 'political' or 'party' truce rather than 'electoral' – it encouraged a different type of behaviour. The terms 'political' and 'party' indicated that there were limits on political activity and, potentially, party propaganda. Whereas, when the term 'electoral' truce was deployed, it gave a clearer indication of what the limitations of the truce were – to electoral contests. The terms 'political' and 'party' are vague and unclear and almost encourage confusion as it was not obvious from these terms what behaviour political parties were expected to exhibit. The Liberals were following a similar narrative to the Unionists in imbuing the truce with a wider scope of interfering with normal party politics. The situation that existed in Scotland during this time for the three main parties becomes, in some ways, rather amusing. They all believed that the other parties were going beyond the agreed terms of the truce. In the case of the Unionists and Liberals, they were imposing rules on themselves that were not required and then attributing this lack of party activity upon these self-imposed rules.

This inter-changeable language resulted in parties' mis-interpreting the truce. It is the most logical reason to explain why the three main parties all agreed to one truce, but in the case of the Conservatives and the Liberals, then imposed a more rigorous version of that truce upon themselves. Labour tended to stick to the formal truce, but on occasion, it referred to the truce as 'political,' which affected and sometimes inhibited activities. Indeed, the lack of political activity within the SLF shows the powerful effect of interpretation and language.

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<sup>114</sup> Acc.11765/14, SLF, minutes of meeting of the executive council, 24 January 1940.

When the party was attempting to continue its normal activities, it was met with difficulties because the party managers were unable to exactly determine what political behaviour was acceptable within the limits of the truce. This led to confusion and ultimately inertia as the Liberals became more concerned about debating what political action was permitted than actually undertaking any.

### **Seizing an Opportunity**

For the minor parties not involved in the electoral truce, the first two years of the war allowed immense opportunities to challenge both the truce as an agreement and also the government candidates, without any opposition. When a minor party made a challenge to the truce, it automatically became the main, or often only, opposition to the government. Therefore, minor parties gained the opportunity to attract voters that they would not normally appeal to. This unfortunately meant they all faced the full might of government propaganda which painted these challengers as unpatriotic, defeatist and even undemocratic for forcing a by-election when there was the war to fight. Parties such as the ILP and the Communist party were less concerned about being portrayed in such a manner as they were openly anti-war and anti-conscription. But in Scotland, a party like the SNP had several difficulties as it was cautiously in support of the war, yet retained the awareness that a significant number of its members were against the war.

The SNP's reaction to the truce, as stated earlier in the chapter, was limited as it was experiencing problems regarding the party's ultimate function, that little attention was initially given to the declaration of the truce. The leadership were concerned that if the party overtly challenged the government it may be shut down as an organisation. As Richard Finlay noted, the SNP considered that by observing the spirit of the truce, despite not being

invited to be a participant, might help achieve its aim of self-government by pressure politics rather than party politics.<sup>115</sup> However, by February 1940, the SNP had made the decision that it would seize the opportunity provided by the truce rather than acquiesce with the government. Soon afterwards, the perfect opportunity to put that propaganda to use became available in the form of a by-election held in the Argyllshire constituency. The electoral truce soon became a central part of the campaign for the SNP and the government candidate, with both sides claiming the patriotic upper hand. It would initially appear that it could be difficult for the SNP to argue against the narrative of national unity portrayed by the government. The strategy it employed, however, was to reverse the idea of the truce being for national unity purposes and claim that the government was in fact using the truce as a method to undermine the democratic process of electioneering.<sup>116</sup> This allowed the SNP to use the argument that it was in fact patriotically fighting for Scotland and the Scottish people's right to vote against the government no matter what the circumstances were. The reaction from the Unionist government candidate Major McCallum throughout the campaign to his SNP counterpart William Power was to weaponise the truce against him at every opportunity. In one of his campaign speeches he thanked the Liberal and the Labour parties for not contesting the by-election and holding firm to the electoral truce, but, he criticised Power for 'thrusting this election upon us.'<sup>117</sup> This suggested that despite knowing the SNP were not part of the truce, an expectation existed that minor parties would obey the 'spirit of the truce,' as this was the behaviour called for at a time of national strife. It also suggested that the idea of the truce had moved far beyond the confines of the

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<sup>115</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 214.

<sup>116</sup> *County of Argyll parliamentary by-election, 10 April, 1940. Candidature of William Power. Election address to the electors of Argyll* (Lochgilphead, 1940.)

<sup>117</sup> *The Scotsman*, 3 April 1940.

actual document and had to some extent become a collective sentiment amongst the political establishment. Somehow the spirit of political co-operation had become the only acceptable attitude for the duration of the war. Ultimately the attempt to break the 'spirit' of the truce by the SNP failed as the government was returned to the seat by a majority of 5000.<sup>118</sup> The party claimed this was due to a swing back to the government with the invasion of Denmark and Norway by Germany the day before polling. Argyll proved to be an individual anomaly for the SNP rather than the start of a focused campaign of contesting by-elections.

The formation of the Churchill coalition received surprisingly enthusiastic support from the party, a statement was released declaring that the SNP council 'affirm its intention to support the war effort of the government.'<sup>119</sup> The statement was John MacCormick's idea as he was still determined to make his idea of a Scottish convention on home rule work. He felt the best way to do this was to foster cross-party support rather than contesting elections. While the truce presented the party with free rein to contest elections, there was the problem that contesting against the Liberals or Labour was not in the best interests of the home rule movement in general. This was due to both parties being sympathetic to the home rule cause. Instead, MacCormick tried to use the truce in a different way to gain concessions for the cause of home rule from the Liberals and Labour. He, in essence, used a form of blackmail with the parties. In exchange for not placing an SNP candidate in a by-election, he would insist the Labour or Liberal candidate would openly declare support for some form of home rule or the holding of a plebiscite after the end of the war.<sup>120</sup> The

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<sup>118</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 614

<sup>119</sup> NLS, Papers of Professor Douglas Young, Acc.6419, Box 44/3, report of the SNP Annual Conference, May 1940.

<sup>120</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, pp. 219-221.

Labour and Liberal parties tacitly agreed to the SNP's terms in order to prevent it intruding in campaigns and, on occasion, it even prevented a contest from taking place.

For the SNP the truce was not always the blessing or the golden opportunity it seemed. As highlighted above, the atmosphere of political co-operation stimulated by the truce made it difficult for the SNP to contest elections without claims of disunity and treachery directed towards it by the government and the media. It may not have been signed up to the truce, but the SNP suffered from the malaise gripping political parties more widely that it censored party activities far beyond expectations.

The Independent Labour Party attracted more criticism for disrupting national unity than any of the other minor parties combined as it was openly anti-war, anti-conscription and supporters of the peace campaigns.<sup>121</sup> It had no qualms about entering into political contests and, unlike the SNP, was not willing to opt out if the other parties gave tacit support for its aims. The ILP were also angry at the Labour party for entering into coalition with the Conservatives, a liaison it saw as an abomination to the aims of socialism.<sup>122</sup> The ILP from the commencement of the war until the summer of 1940 made it clear that it was against the war in all aspects, against the government and the truce agreed between the parties. The ILP was proud to have held firm its stance against the war. Indeed, it was central to the speech given at the Scottish divisional branch annual conference in early 1940 by Annie Maxton, who would later that year contest in the East Renfrewshire by-election.<sup>123</sup> During that campaign she stated:

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<sup>121</sup> *The Scotsman*, 14 April 1941 & 10 December 1941.

<sup>122</sup> LPA, microfilm records of the ILP, minutes of meeting of National Administrative Committee (NAC), 25 May 1940.

<sup>123</sup> *The Scotsman*, 22 January 1940.

The ILP has not observed the political truce and holds itself free to oppose the government candidates in various by-elections.<sup>124</sup>

The use of the term 'political truce' even by the minor parties not signed up to the agreement would suggest that the idea of the truce for all political parties had moved beyond the terms of the original document. As it was often referred to in the press as the 'political truce', perhaps the term had entered a level of unconscious acceptance amongst all involved in politics, especially as the war progressed. The ILP also tried to use the argument mentioned earlier; that the truce and the lack of a democratic electoral process was stifling political debate. It used this increasingly throughout 1941 as the truce was placed under more strain by the lack of open electioneering.<sup>125</sup>

The ILP and the Communist party entered into a war of words with each other in the period 1940-41, which was due to them fighting over a similar support base and both claiming to be the voice of the workers. During 1941, the Communist party, unhappy by the formation of the coalition government, set up The People's Convention, designed to bring together the socialist agenda to defend workers, the formation of a people's government and an end to the war. The meeting attracted 2234 delegates, and afterwards the convention managed to deliver 1.3 million leaflets and manifestos.<sup>126</sup> The convention appeared to be gathering momentum when it was halted by the German invasion on the Soviet Union forcing yet another volte-face by the Communists.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> *Forward*, 30 March 1940.

<sup>125</sup> *The Scotsman*, 10 December 1941.

<sup>126</sup> Laybourn & Murphy, *Under the Red Flag*, pp. 111-2.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, p. 111-2.

The Communist party were placed under heavy scrutiny by the ILP regarding its sudden support for the war, leading to the publication of articles in *Forward* claiming the party could not be trusted.<sup>128</sup> Other parties also raised this concern about the Communists' policies. The former Scottish Secretary of state, Ernest Brown, gave a speech before the Dunbartonshire by-election of 1941 condemning the Communist party for changing its stance under duress from Moscow, stating that they could not claim to be guardians of democracy when the party was so inconsistent.<sup>129</sup> The Communist party was also heavily criticised for causing disaffection amongst workers, particularly in the West of Scotland. The situation was entirely changed upon the Soviet Union's entry into the war, when the Communist party became far more co-operative with the government. There was even mention of the party being willing to consider a political truce.<sup>130</sup> Any peace campaigns and efforts to undermine the war effort were severely halted, this caused an even more disdainful reaction from the ILP. The only Communist member of parliament, Willie Gallacher, made a statement in June 1941 asserting that 'it would discuss with members of the Labour party and any other party to ensure co-operation.'<sup>131</sup> The Communists' reactions to the idea of the truce and the operation of wartime politics completely changed during the first few years of the war. The party still did not fully support the idea of the continuation of the truce or the coalition government as it was not a 'people's government', but it certainly expressed less hostility towards the truce by the end of 1941 than the other small parties.

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<sup>128</sup> *Forward*, 28 June, 12 July, 19 July 1941

<sup>129</sup> *Falkirk Herald*, 19 February 1941.

<sup>130</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 27 June 1941.

<sup>131</sup> *The Scotsman*, 27 June 1941.

### **A Problematic Truce**

The electoral truce endured a difficult infancy. While outwardly straightforward in nature, the truce was not understood by any of the political parties in a simple way. As highlighted in this chapter, the truce was formed during a period when several other wartime regulations were created, regulations which restricted and prevented the normal operation of many everyday events and included the meeting of political parties. The MOI's LACs only placed a limit on political partisanship for the purposes of committee operation as they were created to try and maintain morale. The simultaneous nature of these regulations meant that many constituency parties believed it was the electoral truce which demanded these rules to be in place. However, there was no limitation placed on normal party activity by either that regulation or by the electoral truce. However, the way the parties interpreted these regulations and reacted to them clearly showed there was a fundamental and perhaps wilful misunderstanding regarding the expected behaviour of political parties. Through constantly referring to the truce in its most limiting terminology – of 'party' truce or 'political' truce – the parties essentially limited what they were able to do on an operational basis. The longer the misinterpretation of the truce was allowed to manifest by party officials ultimately resulted in the press reporting these falsehoods. Thus, creating a 'spirit of the truce' mood as an unspoken restraint on wartime political behaviour.

In the case of the Liberal party, it was easier to subconsciously believe that the war was restricting the level of activity it could engage in, rather than trying to find a way for the recovery of a party in terminal decline. The truce may not have been openly used as a scapegoat for the problems that faced all political parties, but the fact that there was an agreement which could be blamed for a lack of political ambition was certainly a factor in

the ambiguity. The Unionists had a level of awareness that its ideas on the truce was far beyond what it was required by the original agreement. However, the party wrapped itself in the banner of national unity and hoped to reap the rewards at the end of the war. Labour simply followed as closely to the agreed terms as possible and did not use the truce as an excuse to halt party activity. It had no need to blame the truce, as there was much for the party to gain with its altruistic entrance into coalition. The Scottish branches of political parties found themselves restricted in their activities and were unable to challenge the status quo enough for their central branches to amend the restraints they forced constituency parties to place on their activities. It was inevitable that the levels of restriction on political activity in the early years of the war would encourage continual challenges in the later years. Indeed, defiance of the truce increased as minor parties grew bolder, determined to disregard expectations placed on political behaviour.

## **Chapter Two – The Breaking of the Electoral Truce?**

### **The Difficult Middle Years**

The middle years of the war have traditionally been emphasised in the historiography as being the most difficult and testing time for the truce. Paul Addison has argued that these years saw the truce increasingly challenged by independent candidates who were angered by the direction of the war and the stranglehold the coalition government placed on political expression.<sup>1</sup> The Conservative party across the country became the target for independent candidates often running on a progressive socialist agenda. The emergence of the Common Wealth party in 1942 also caused difficulties in maintaining the spirit of the truce, due to its successful recruitment of left-wing voters. The truce was regularly flouted by Labour party members who supported independent and occasionally Common Wealth candidates instead of its coalition partners. The Common Wealth party made little impact in Scotland as it concentrated its efforts in England, intervening only in the North Midlothian by-election of 1943 which it came very close to winning.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore the period 1942-3 was distinctive in Scotland. There was the re-invention of the SNP as an electoral force after the party split in 1942, with the moderate members rallying around John MacCormick's Scottish Convention. The SNP forged a new strategy which increasingly focused on fighting elections and it placed pressure on the truce by picking up disgruntled Labour voters. However, the attitude towards the truce from the Scottish branches of the main political parties increased in terms of frustration with their central party management.

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<sup>1</sup> Addison, 'By-elections of the Second World War', p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> Calder, Common Wealth Party, part 1. p. 131.

As will be examined in this chapter, in 1944 a shift in focus happened across all the political parties as they turned their thoughts towards the post-war general election. This resulted in the coalition parties developing a curious relationship with the truce in terms of promoting its maintenance in public, but privately planning for the termination of the agreement at the end of the war. The Unionists were still eager to promote the truce as being essential to unity, yet were privately a little more cautious about following a very restrictive version due to the need to stimulate the organisation. Labour continued to have a difficult relationship with the truce; its grassroots members were more eager than ever for the truce to be terminated. The NEC had difficulties containing this view after the summer of 1944 when the argument about the need to maintain the truce for the good of the nation was weakened. The Liberals remained concerned that its leader would keep the party in a form of the electoral truce at the end of the war and tried to circumvent this any way it could.

This chapter will further explore the themes which were raised during the previous chapter, additionally, it will focus on three further themes which will aid in understanding the reasons why the electoral truce survived to the end of the war. First, the chapter will emphasise that the Scottish branches of all parties made numerous appeals warning their central party management that drastic measures were required to prevent further organisational decline, due to the narrow interpretations applied to the truce during the early years of the war. Secondly, the parties' shifting interpretations of exactly what the 'truce' truly meant and the ways in which it shaped political engagement across Scotland will be further explored. Finally, it will consider how parties managed their obligations to the truce while tacitly preparing for a renewal of political contest in the anticipated general election.

### **A Narrow Interpretation**

When reflecting on 1941 in its annual report, the SCUA stated the following:

While it is right and proper that party politics should be placed in “cold storage” during the war, it is important to remember that with the coming of peace the present truce will lapse and political organisations will resume their normal activities.<sup>3</sup>

There was a slow realisation spreading throughout the Unionist party that it could no longer afford to blindly obey orders from CCO of adhering to the truce beyond the original agreement. In early January 1942, at a Western Division Executive committee meeting, there was discussion about the self-imposed sacrifices made by the party in the interests of national unity, and the danger these sacrifices posed.<sup>4</sup> The Unionists were sustaining heavy attacks not only from Labour but the SNP, the ILP and the Communists, all of which blamed the party for the way the war was developing. The SCUA Central Council held a crisis meeting in February 1942 to discuss its concerns and also to decide upon a solution. Two Unionist MPs, Major Lloyd and Major McCallum, had tried to tackle the problem of the declining Unionist associations throughout 1940-41 and were particularly strong in their determination to take action. Major Lloyd moved a resolution that both SCUA divisional committees needed to work together to improve the maintenance and efficiency of the local organisations in each constituency.<sup>5</sup> He gave a stinging review of the way the party had dealt with the truce:

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<sup>3</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/26 viii, annual reports of the Glasgow Unionist Association, Annual Report for 1941.

<sup>4</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/54, minutes of special meeting of the Central Council of the SCUA, 27 February 1942.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

It was a difficult problem to keep our machinery in good order without indulging in party politics. We had interpreted the party truce much too narrowly and to the great disadvantage of the Unionist party. We had assumed that we must hold no meetings in constituencies, and consequently the whole party was ceasing almost entirely to function.<sup>6</sup>

Lloyd had made the observation that was frequently referred to in the previous chapter: that the Unionists had an entirely different interpretation to the terms of the truce than were agreed in the original document. The most revealing statement he made was that the party 'assumed' that it was not to hold meetings or to operate in a way that was political. Once again, the truce was referred to in the most limiting capacity – the party truce – the name alone indicating that a lot more was expected from the truce than just the non-contesting of by-elections. This term suggested that edicts had been placed on party behaviour and that political parties had called a truce with each other in all senses. Other members of the council agreed that there was an ambiguity in the terms of the truce, a Mr William Strang complained:

That no ruling had been given about the party truce. There was a feeling of frustration amongst Unionist workers everywhere. It was for those who entered into the party truce to give an interpretation of its exact meaning.

Frustrated with CCO's inconsistent communication which was only to worsen over the coming years, the Unionists finally recognised that CCO had left the party with a fundamental misunderstanding about the terms of the truce. Paul Addison alluded to this idea in *The Road to 1945*. He observed that there was a constant refrain from the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Conservatives that Labour was breaking the 'political truce' by making a complaint whenever the 'left' made a statement that was vaguely party-based. However, the Conservatives also made party statements which usually came from Churchill, and were jingoistic sentiments equating the Conservative party and the British nation into one entity.<sup>7</sup>

The confusion was further increased as some members of the SCUA actually knew that the truce was not related to party politics and did only relate to by-elections. A statement given by a Mr Young made it clear that:

The party truce only affected by-elections but, it had been the policy of the Unionist party to observe the spirit as well as the letter of the truce. The PM was very strong about this. We must try to keep our organisation together during the war period but it must be remembered that the winning of the war was the paramount consideration.<sup>8</sup>

This idea of country before party as the main Conservative strategy during the First World War was discussed in the previous chapter, and has also been widely discussed by Thorpe.<sup>9</sup> Addison also notes that the Conservatives established the narrative of being the coalition partner rather than the party of government during the First World War, and used that fact to its advantage. However, the party did not like being in the opposite position during the Second World War.<sup>10</sup> Churchill's insistence on the truce being observed in a far narrower manner than required was something that certain party members in Scotland were aware of, but had decided not to voice their doubts about at an earlier stage. Examples of these

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<sup>7</sup> Addison, *The Road to 1945*, p. 128.

<sup>8</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/54, minutes of SCUA Meeting, 24 February 1942.

<sup>9</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, pp. 187-8.

<sup>10</sup> Addison, *The Road to 1945*, p. 129.

were noted in the previous chapter when members of the SCUA divisional councils raised concerns about the truce's impact on the organisation as early as January 1940.<sup>11</sup>

The debate over the scope of the truce continued into the summer of 1942 when a resolution was sent to the Eastern Divisional Council by a member of the Dundee SCUA:

The Conservative and Unionist Party must in the future put a less rigid interpretation on the party truce.... Also begs to record its most empathic protest against the style and method adopted by the BBC in the reporting of the Labour party Whitsuntide conference and particularly objects to the broadcasting of recorded extracts from these speeches in news bulletins, considering as it does that this practice is wholly contrary to the spirit and letter of the party truce.<sup>12</sup>

The resolution received a unanimous assent and was forwarded to the Scottish Chief Whip, the government Chief Whip and eventually the Prime Minister.<sup>13</sup> This 'spirit of the truce' was referred to in the previous chapter as a spirit of co-operation and an atmosphere of unanimity between the parties, aided to an extent by the media in ensuring that open political contest and national unity became intertwined ideas. The Conservatives bargained on this 'spirit of the truce' to circumvent any issues that arose within the party about the precise terms of the agreement. Churchill was especially encouraging of this attitude – that the self-sacrifice of the party would be rewarded at the ballot boxes. He was also guilty of believing in his own profile as the 'great uniter' to subvert the issue of voters deserting the government for progressive socialist independent candidates.<sup>14</sup> However, as 1942 progressed it became clear that no matter how much Churchill believed the government

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<sup>11</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/32, minutes of meeting of Western Divisional Council of the SCUA, 10 January 1940.

<sup>12</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/44, minutes of meeting of the Eastern Divisional Council of the SCUA, 10 July 1942.

<sup>13</sup> CPA, Scottish Unionist Members Committee (SUMC), Scottish affairs files 1/46, letter from A. Beaton to J. Crowder, Secretary of 1922 Committee, 15 July 1942.

<sup>14</sup> Ramsden, 'Winston Churchill and the Leadership of the Conservative Party,' pp. 105-107.

could rely on the loyalty of voters alone to return them at by-elections, he was continually proved wrong. The war was progressing badly, the loss of Singapore in 1942 dented confidence, and resentment began to build amongst grassroots members within the coalition parties against the truce.<sup>15</sup> It was being increasingly seen as a stranglehold on democracy instead of being a measure to allow the government to better prosecute the war.

The Unionist party was at the disadvantage of not being able to take independent action, it appeared that the Scottish branch of the party despite raising concerns to CCO about the truce and the abandonment of political activity, were not taken seriously. However, there was a general movement within the Conservative party in 1942 to question the wisdom of CCO's ideas on the truce. By the end of 1942, several branches in England had written to the General Director of the party, Sir Robert Topping, asking for clarification on the terms of the truce.<sup>16</sup> A reply sent to one branch member confirmed what has been stated above about the general strategy of the party, which was to categorise the truce in the most limiting terms and claim the moral high ground over the other parties:

The party truce was a document signed by the chief whip of each of the three parties by which they agreed not to nominate candidates during the war for parliamentary vacancies the candidate nominated by the party holding the seat at the time of the vacancy occurring. It contained no other provisions. There existed, however, at the outbreak of war a feeling throughout the country that it was not in the national interest to engage in political controversy and that view is still held very strongly by many people, particularly in the Conservative party. It is this general understanding, I

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<sup>15</sup> Calder, *Common Wealth Party*, Part 1, p. 68

<sup>16</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, pp. 15-16.

think that most people have in mind when they refer to the party truce and not simply to the document which was signed by the Whips.<sup>17</sup>

This re-enforces the idea raised earlier that the Conservatives wished to use the 'spirit of the truce,' to create an environment of consensus and co-operation to suit their own agenda, as it meant the party did not have to expend time and energy fixing and reforming the party at local levels. Indeed, as a member of the Unionist Central Committee observed, 'the Unionist organisation was not efficient even before the war.'<sup>18</sup> This suggests that the truce and the various regulations placed on political activity were used to an extent as a scapegoat by the party for a lack of action and progress.

The SCUA end-of-year report for 1942 succinctly summaries the many issues and problems the organisation had faced. It firstly identified that the SCUA council has 'scrupulously observed in all implications the party truce agreed upon at the outbreak of war.' However, the SCUA refer to the activity of the 'opposition' and the million votes cast at the Labour party conference in favour of breaking the truce.<sup>19</sup> The second problem was the increase of independent candidates at by-elections who were supportive of Churchill, but not the government, they were tempting Unionist voters to their cause because of the lack of party activity.<sup>20</sup> The use of the term 'opposition' to describe the Labour party was curious and suggested that, despite the coalition, the Unionists began to think in terms of party difference again. There was a detectable shift in blaming the Labour Party for the problems with the truce. Meanwhile, the Unionists had firmly established the 'country-before-party'

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<sup>17</sup> CPA, CCO 4/2/142, letter from Robert Topping to Captain Lancaster, 1 December 1942.

<sup>18</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/54, minutes of SCUA Meeting, 24 February 1942.

<sup>19</sup> NLS, Acc.11368/78, Western Divisional Council of the SCUA Report for 1942, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, pp. 2-3.

narrative, implying that it was scrupulously preventing the failure of the truce and maintaining unity. Meanwhile, the Unionists claimed the Labour party selfishly placed party concerns first, and were trying to break the truce which allowed the government of the country to operate smoothly. This was an ironic stance as the Unionists' use of the truce was a clear political manoeuvre. It used Labour's annual conference vote on the truce as an excuse to attack the party, and to begin a propaganda drive which would last until the General Election of 1945 to discredit the Labour Party and its attitude to the coalition.

For the Unionists, 1942 was a year in which they started to fight back as a party. This was despite the National Council's reluctance to challenge Churchill's insistence that the truce was obeyed to the law and not just the letter. The Unionists were determined to try and stimulate interest in the party and not to allow the truce to interfere with party operation. This mentality continued into 1943, when at almost every meeting, both divisions of the SCUA reflected on the parties' organisation and function. Discontent with the truce rumbled on in the Labour party especially given that in military campaign terms the tide of the war appeared to be turning. The triumphant announcement of the Beveridge Report and its key policy suggestions which were enthusiastically supported by Labour, led activists to become ever more frustrated by the truce. The Unionists considered the reaction of the public to the truce:

The public as a whole quite definitely want the political truce to be continued. It is clear however that the serious political complications which would follow its breaking are insufficiently recognised.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/33, minutes of meeting of the education and propaganda sub-committee, 29 April 1943.

Yet the Unionists acknowledged the possibility that the truce may not survive beyond the summer of 1943. At one meeting, while discussing the possibility of a fundraising appeal, one member had 'expressed doubt about whether the time was opportune for making the appeal'. She thought that a better result might be achieved in the 'event of a break in the political truce which seemed to be a possibility in the near future.'<sup>22</sup> Labour's ongoing reluctance to continue with the truce was obviously a concern for the Unionists. However, a bigger problem existed within the SCUA. The same questions regarding the extent to which the truce should be observed were still being asked by members during 1943. At one meeting the Scottish Whip gave the following statement regarding the truce:

The whip explained that the political truce was a voluntary arrangement entered into at the beginning of the war by the Unionist party, the Labour party and the Liberal party... It only affected by-elections, but it was the Prime Minister's wish that so far as the Unionist party was concerned it should be observed in the spirit as well as in the letter.<sup>23</sup>

For the SCUA to be continually asking the same questions for over a year indicated how slow progress was in changing opinions across the Conservative and Unionist Party about the truce. This can be demonstrated by the replies from CCO to requests from local party members for clarification on the truce. There were several of these over the course of 1943 all receiving a similar reply. This letter sent in June 1943 by Major Dugdale is worth quoting at length as it offers an illuminating insight into the truce from the Conservative's perspective:

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<sup>22</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/33, minutes of meeting of the women's executive committee of the Western Divisional Council of the SUA, 8 April 1943.

<sup>23</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/33, minutes of meeting of the Western Divisional Council, 7 May 1943.

The truth is that the party truce has been interpreted in different ways by the different parties. The Conservatives have always taken the view that we ought to sink our domestic differences and that party politics should be suspended...the other parties however took a different view and interpreted in a strictly limited sense the agreement assigned by the whips in September 1939... [they] have considered themselves free to propagate their doctrines and conduct campaigns against the Conservatives on traditional peace-time lines...the Conservatives, however, have refrained from retaliating, and by their forbearance over a long period and in the face of considerable provocation, have saved the country from being involved in acute political strife at a time when the national effort should be wholly concentrated on the war.<sup>24</sup>

This reply gives a fascinating insight into the interpretation the Conservative party chairman was still applying to the truce in 1943, and in the face of questions and pushback from grassroots party members. It highlights the disconnect between central and local parties over the issue. Indeed, CCO's reluctance to stop using the truce as a political tool in an attempt to gain the upper hand in the battle of public opinion showed a lack of awareness to the realities faced by constituency parties in trying to maintain any kind of normal political operation. Perhaps as a result of this questioning by local party members, CCO eventually acknowledged that stubbornly clinging to a holier-than-thou interpretation of the truce and limiting party activity was no longer accepted as being in its best interests. It was finally recognised by the party that more needed to be done to bolster organisations, but also to ensure that the party message was broadcast to the public. Churchill's preference

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<sup>24</sup> CPA, CCO 4/2/142, letter from T Dugdale to K Glenny, 24 June 1943.

that the truce was observed beyond the original agreement was increasingly emphasised as being his idea, and not CCO's preferred course of action. Thorpe also noted that there was discontent with Churchill's lack of interest in the party management from 1942 onwards.<sup>25</sup> Eventually it was agreed by party chairman Thomas Dugdale that Conservative MPs could address public meetings, but overt criticism of other parties should be avoided.<sup>26</sup> Churchill himself gave a controversial address to the nation in March 1943 on the theme of a four-year plan for the future.<sup>27</sup> While it was well received by the Unionists, Labour activists considered it to be a Conservative manifesto speech. The most worrying aspect of the speech for all party activists was it gave the impression that the truce could continue at the end of the war. This was an especially disturbing thought for some Labour members.<sup>28</sup>

For the Unionists, 1943 was a difficult year where it was constantly justifying the truce and the reasons for maintaining it. The party faced the difficulty of combining Churchill's idea of the truce and the political reality of the damage that interpretation was causing to the Unionist organisations – it was a problematic balancing act. By the end of 1943, it placed more importance on the maintenance of organisations over the truce. The Unionists encountered difficulties on several fronts, like its English counterparts it faced the growth of left-wing movements. However, in Scotland, it was not the Common Wealth party but the burgeoning strength of the Communists and the propaganda broadcast by the ILP in countless by-elections that strengthened the narrative against the Unionists. The debates from within the SCUA at the meeting in February 1942 showed that there was a wide variety of opinion on what level of activity the party believed it was able to conduct. It was difficult

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<sup>25</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, pp. 24-5.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Eade, (ed,) *The War Speeches of Winston Churchill, Volume 2*. (London, 1965,) pp. 425-437.

<sup>28</sup> Crowcroft, *Attlee's War*, pp. 151-4.

to take action when CCO was still demanding some acquiesce with the 'spirit of the truce,' and expected the SCUA to reinvigorate the party organisation within these unspoken limits. This uncertainty highlighted how much confusion there was surrounding the truce and what the Unionists were able to do in terms of being a political party. The language and interpretation of the truce was key to the Unionists' behaviour. The truce was consistently referred to as the 'party truce' and occasionally the 'political truce'. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the use of this terminology was placing limitations on what the party believed it was able to do. The Unionists' understanding of the truce was always more involved than it needed to be, because it was thinking about the truce as a 'political' or 'party' truce which placed limits on, and eradicated, the need for parties to have individual ideas. Whereas using the term 'electoral' truce focused on the actual purpose of the truce. By not using that term, The Unionists were able to convince themselves that the truce was more limiting, and therefore unable to fix the issues with the level of party member engagement.

### **Party Before Country?**

The final two years of the war saw the Scottish Unionists work hard to try and overturn what they saw as the decline of the party caused by, 'the strict adherence to the party truce not only in letter but in spirit.'<sup>29</sup> The course of action dictated by CCO had left the SCUA with a political headache. At a meeting in early January 1944, the Scottish Whip declared that constituency associations needed to focus more on political work rather than social activities. Also, that the setting up of an emergency election committee would be desirable to be able

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<sup>29</sup> CPA, SUMC 1/9, report on Unionist party organisation in Scotland, July 1944.

to quickly prepare for any contests.<sup>30</sup> The association was fortunate in the final two years of the war to not be required to fight any by-elections. The poor results that befell the Conservatives south of the border over the course of 1944 were a concern to the SCUA who discussed the results, but felt local issues to be the cause and that the country was still behind the National Government.<sup>31</sup> The GUA noted in its annual report in February 1944 that its aim was to promote national unity and maintain the organisation.<sup>32</sup> These two aims had not always been possible for the Unionists due to the party's ideas on the truce, but its priorities had now subtly shifted. However, CCO and the party leadership were not as willing to make any changes to the operation of the truce. Both Thorpe and Ramsden have argued that the leadership of the Conservatives nationwide was practically non-existent.<sup>33</sup> Churchill was focused on the war and was not interested in resuming party politics. When some within the party wanted a more aggressive by-election strategy after the defeat in West-Derbyshire, Churchill consulted with party chairman, Thomas Dugdale, who warned him that adopting this strategy may break the truce. He refused to consider it and insisted the truce remained much as it was.<sup>34</sup> The Scottish Unionists were evidently fighting an arduous battle against party feeling on the truce. As Harvie has noted, the press in Scotland were also fairly right-wing and supported the Unionists.<sup>35</sup> At the end of February 1944, a stinging editorial was published in *The Scotsman* which it chastised the Common Wealth and other independents who had entered by-elections stating that it was:

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<sup>30</sup> NLS, Acc.10242/33, minutes of meeting of the SCUA Western Divisional Council, 7 January 1944.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 23 February 1944.

<sup>32</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/75, GUA annual report, 25 February 1944.

<sup>33</sup> Thorpe *Parties at War*, pp. 24-5, Ramsden, 'Churchill as Conservative Leader', pp. 103-5.

<sup>34</sup> Ramsden, 'Churchill as Conservative Leader,' p. 102.

<sup>35</sup> Harvie, p. 937.

‘Ridiculous for these disturbers of political peace to think that they knew better than leading politicians of all parties when it is time to break the electoral truce’.<sup>36</sup>

It was an unsubtle attempt to make those who opposed the truce look like unqualified upstarts. The question of what kind of political activity they should be engaged in concerned Conservatives across the country in the latter part of 1944, and how this fitted with the ‘truce’. Correspondence between the Conservative Party Chairman Major Dugdale and a constituency branch about the ‘party’ truce indicated that central office were finally on the same wavelength as the SCUA:

...It will be perfectly in order for Conservative political meetings to be held in your constituency and in fact I propose in the course of the next week to write to the chairmen of all constituency associations suggesting that meetings should be held this autumn.<sup>37</sup>

Thorpe notes that even after this directive the revival was halting.<sup>38</sup> Not so in the SCUA as the revival of the political side of its operations began much earlier. The Unionists were assisted by continual reflection on the effect the truce had on its organisation and the best means to rectify the situation. One very telling statement from a report written on the constituency organisation by the SCUA contained coded advice on how the party was to proceed:

Everything possible should be done to hearten the rank and file, to inspire them with the feeling that they belong to a great and powerful organisation... It will not be done

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<sup>36</sup> *The Scotsman*, 26 February 1944.

<sup>37</sup> CPA, CCO 4/2/142, Correspondence between Major Dugdale and Sir Richard Wells, 14 September 1944.

<sup>38</sup> Thorpe, pp. 161-2.

by placating opponents at the expense of supporters. Such a policy can be carried too far, even in the name of national unity.<sup>39</sup>

Opinion had shifted within the party towards the truce, although it was technically still in operation, the party was slowly starting to place its own needs first. The report was damning on the leadership and it was clear that the Unionists felt let down by the way it had handled party operations.<sup>40</sup> The final 18 months of the war saw the Unionists superficially still committed to the truce, while ensuring that politics and party matters were firmly on any meeting agenda. The final two by-elections of the war in Scotland saw Labour field the official government candidates. Labour made little reference to the truce or acknowledged that it represented the 'government', and the election literature was clearly marked as Labour.<sup>41</sup> These incidents encouraged the Unionists to resume a more independent line. Curiously, the problem of interchangeable terminology when referring to the truce became less of an issue in the final years of the war. While the Unionists still only referred to it as 'party' and 'political,' the lack of concern for the truce from the Labour party caused the party to worry less about its own political behaviour. When the Unionists realised that Labour was assuming a more independent line in by-elections, it felt secure in claiming impeccable party behaviour and blamed Labour for stirring up party concerns.

When reflecting on the Unionists' relationship with the truce from 1942 to 1945 there was a marked shift. The previous chapter had shown that nationally the party had sacrificed itself for the sake of national unity. While the Unionists acquiesced with this policy to a certain extent, it still maintained its organisations. However, as Thorpe has observed, the SCUA were

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<sup>39</sup> CPA, SUMC 2/9, SUA Western Division Council, Report given on Constituency organisation 6 September 1944.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> NLS, Acc.10242/127, By-election literature, 1939-1945.

also far more critical of the truce throughout the war, because it reported to the Scottish Whip rather than CCO.<sup>42</sup> This semi-independence may have assisted the party in maintaining this critical stance. 1942 saw the Unionists ask serious questions about the nature of the truce and what effect it had on the party. The conference held in February 1942 on the subject showed the deeply flawed way the truce had been handled by the Conservative party organisation, and had encouraged the party to abstain from being 'political'. The fact that the party continually used the terms 'political' and 'party' when talking about a truce which was actually *electoral* added to the confusion about what purpose it served, and inferred a deeper meaning upon it. Encouragement by Churchill to go beyond the terms of the truce to ensure the party won the patriotic badge was not only confusing but damaging to the organisations. When the party began to continually question the truce and what exactly it was allowed to do, it gave the impetus it needed to remember the Unionists' purpose and not to become too apolitical. The problems with truce breaking in 1943-4 and the Labour party's internal battles with it, further encouraged Unionist reflection on the subject. The continuation of Labour pushing a party agenda outside of the government belatedly encouraged the Unionists by 1944 to do the same. Although, as John Ramsden has observed, the Conservatives were far too wedded to the coalition government and made no provision beyond it for party matters. Unlike Labour who had pursued its own party policy outside government since 1940.<sup>43</sup>

### **A Tiresome Truce**

The historiography of Labour's issues with the electoral truce in 1942 is already well established. From Addison to Jeffrey, Brookes to Crowcroft, historians have examined

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<sup>42</sup> Thorpe, p. 161.

<sup>43</sup> Ramsden, 'Churchill as Leader', p. 105.

Labour's difficult relationship with the truce during the middle years of the war. Given the many events occurring in England during this period, it is unsurprising that a Scottish aspect of the truce has thus far been deemed unworthy of individual examination. However, the growing strength of the Communist party in the West of Scotland combined with the realisation of Scottish Labour organisers that engagement with the party was declining makes examination of the truce crucial to understanding the wider political landscape.

The Scottish organisation of the Labour party was particularly concerned about falling membership and the lack of political engagement early in 1942. At a meeting of the NEC organisation sub-committee, Mary Auld a member of the Scottish Executive Committee, made an illuminating statement. She remarked that from the perspective of Labour in Scotland and especially for the Glasgow division, the suspension of local government elections caused more problems with engaging its membership than the parliamentary electoral truce.<sup>44</sup> This was due to several pacifist local councillors who had expressed that 'they would be ashamed to ask anyone to join the Labour party and that their people would only be doing the scavenger work of the Tory party.'<sup>45</sup> Auld then implied that the continuation of Labour in government made efforts to increase party membership hopeless. She suggested the best strategy was simply to prevent any further decline. This negative picture of party organisation in a Scottish stronghold suggests that Labour were also experiencing similar difficulties in managing the expectations of behaviour in relation to the truce.

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<sup>44</sup> LPA, NEC Files 1942, minutes of meeting of the organisational sub-committee, 28 January 1942.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Scottish organising secretary John Taylor later submitted a report on the performance of the Glasgow section of the party. The report stated that many of the constituency branches were performing below par; out of fifteen branches only seven were meeting regularly and functioning at normal levels, five were meeting sporadically and three were devoid of almost all activity.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, the Glasgow District Labour party was refused affiliation for the duration of 1942 after several members were accused of corruption. There were concerns about the Communist leanings of several councillors, and the re-affiliation of the Scottish Socialist Party had caused an excess of council members all requiring re-nomination.<sup>47</sup> This suggested that the party, like the Unionists, were struggling to maintain a normal level of operation. It cannot be denied that the war itself caused difficulties in maintaining attendance at political meetings, but the impact of the truce on political activity is also relevant.

At the same meeting where Taylor presented his memorandum, there was discussion about the ability of Labour to function as a political party and not as a member of the coalition. From the discussion which took place, it was apparent that the Labour party were required to maintain a difficult balancing act. It had frequently stated how important it was for political parties to continue to contribute their ideas, but, that discretion was required, and normal peacetime levels of party engagement were not possible. Labour then set out its main policy priorities in relation to party propaganda operations which were: to give aid to the government, secure unity in parliament by co-operation rather than party obstruction and to maintain the electoral truce.<sup>48</sup> The reference to the truce as 'electoral' once again by

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<sup>46</sup> LPA, NEC Files, organisation sub-committee meeting, memorandum to the National Agent on the present position of the Labour movement in Glasgow from John Taylor, 28 January 1942.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

the Labour party and not the 'political' or 'party' truce suggests that, despite the dampening of party activity, it had not forgotten that the agreement referred purely to by-elections.

This indicates that the misnaming of the truce and the effect it had on party activity by the other members of the coalition was more deliberate, as Labour also experienced problems but did not misname the truce or overemphasise that it was solely the cause of party issues.

However, as Robert Crowcroft has observed, Attlee and his allies on the NEC were increasingly directing the party towards closer co-operation with the Conservatives. In April 1942, Attlee had proposed to the NEC that Labour party members should be allowed to speak on behalf of either the Conservatives or Liberals in by-election campaigns. This was a move which the NEC were unhappy about, but acquiesced to.<sup>49</sup> Less than a month later, the policy was considered insufficient, and Attlee proposed that a standardised joint statement of support be given by himself, Churchill, Sinclair and Liberal National leader Ernest Brown before any by-election to the government candidate. This decision pushed the original agreement and purpose of the truce to the limit, and by-elections became 'coupon' elections in all but name.<sup>50</sup>

Labour's SEC had to consider what would be best for the Scottish branch of the party. The SEC had debated the decision when it was only regarding the appearance of Labour party members at hustings with a Unionist candidate. The committee considered all the options available to Labour voters, and decided that a link up with the Unionists could cause difficulties for the party. The SEC felt that 'open and formal advice to Labour voters to support Unionist candidates would in many Scottish constituencies provide the opposite

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<sup>49</sup> Crowcroft, *Attlee's War*, pp. 127-8.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 129.

result'.<sup>51</sup> It was especially felt that the policy would be badly received in divisions where the Unionists had ignored the 'spirit of the truce' by using its majorities on local councils to elect non-Labour members to Labour vacancies.<sup>52</sup>

Interestingly, the Liberals were not mentioned at all, the main point of concern was the Unionists. The Liberal party were never required to contest a wartime by-election in Scotland, which explains the lack of consideration of the party by Labour. Evidently the issues that were affecting Labour nationally in managing its relationship with the Unionists in both the coalition and the truce were prevalent in Scotland. The SEC indicated that the joint statement of support would not work in Scottish constituencies as it believed Scottish Labour voters could not possibly be persuaded to vote for the Unionists, regardless of the circumstances.<sup>53</sup> Despite Labour's centralising tendencies, it was clear that the SEC were determined that it would follow the best course of action for the Scottish branches of the party.

The biggest issue that Labour faced as a party in 1942 is already well known in the historiography: that a motion was proposed to end the electoral truce at the annual conference and was only narrowly defeated. One of the most interesting and illuminating statements in the whole debate was given by Herbert Morrison which discussed the original truce document signed in 1939. He proposed a reconsideration of the agreed terms, now that the party was part of the government, in an attempt to stem the tide of independent candidates being elected in by-elections.<sup>54</sup> The extracts from his statement below indicate that Labour, for the first time, were required to consider the truce beyond a purely electoral

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<sup>51</sup> LPA, minutes of meeting of the SEC, 18 April 1942.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> LPA, Minutes of SEC meeting, 18 April 1942.

<sup>54</sup> *1942 Labour Party Annual Conference Report* (London, 1942), pp. 145-6.

arrangement, and it pulled the party's understanding of the truce closer to that of the Conservatives and Liberals:

The pact between us, the Conservatives and both Liberal parties that we would not oppose each other at by-elections, that was the electoral truce as it operated when Mr Chamberlain was Prime Minister. In May 1940 when the Labour party with the authority of the annual conference behind it entered the government that was another stage in our relationships with the other political parties, we ceased to be the opposition and became part of His Majesty's government. That inevitably involved closer co-operation with the other parties in government...Nevertheless the old orthodox conception of the Chamberlain period of the electoral truce operated up to the time when independent candidates became a serious element in opposition to candidates on behalf of the government...we are part of the government and we should wish for the success of government candidates.<sup>55</sup>

Morrison noticeably made a distinction between the operation of the truce during the early years of the war before the existence of the coalition when government candidates were easily winning by-elections, and the period in 1942 when even Labour was losing ground to independent candidates. This situation propelled the Labour party to reconsider the terms and limitations of the truce. It was the reason why the addendum on the subject of the truce was presented to the national conference in the first place, to gain agreement that the truce should continue but on slightly altered terms. For the Labour party, the electoral truce was increasingly a political amnesty between the parties, which forced it to prioritise the return of the government candidate through promotion and support regardless of party

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

attachment. The existence of the coalition prompted this change of opinion on the truce as before the coalition, Labour had little to lose in comparison to the Conservatives. In the political climate of 1942, all coalition parties were affected by the issues the truce caused in by-election contests. This was Labour's challenge to the Conservatives' control of the 'country-before-party' narrative. This was compounded further by Morrison's uncompromising statement on the expectations of the party:

We would consult with the Constituency Labour Party with a view to ascertaining their views and would take them fully into account before reaching any conclusions. There is no question of the executive requiring the local party to support a non-Labour government candidate...it follows that we would have the right to the same support from other parties if we wanted it...constituency Labour parties should not become involved in the support of anti-government candidates as that would be an intolerable state of affairs.<sup>56</sup>

The response to Morrison's statement was mixed, as was discussed above, the SEC had not reacted well to the policy that it should share a platform with Unionist by-election candidates as it would not be received well by the public. Some of the delegates at the conference also made their feelings on the subject known. A Mr Scolland from Rutherglen DLP made a very interesting point:

In the addendum it says "in promoting the return of government candidates at parliamentary by-elections", there is no question in the original agreement of any such thing...this party has an appeal to the man in the street due to its efforts to bring about a new system of society, it is for this reason we have appealed to him to

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

leave the Conservative party and not to support the Liberals... are we going to talk to the ordinary working man in Glasgow who is not concerned about high politics but is concerned about what the movement will offer him. Are we to tell him that he must support the people that he has fought against in the past at our instigation?<sup>57</sup>

The delegate made an excellent point that the original truce agreement made no provision for supporting fellow government candidates. The addendum was actually attempting to correct the issues the coalition experienced in by-elections by extending the 'informal truce' on Labour's part to make concessions towards coalition partners. With Morrison claiming that little had changed in terms of the truce, he was technically correct, the official electoral truce document was not altered in any way during the war years. But the expectations placed on parties to adhere to unspoken agreements increased frequently until the pressure placed on political party behaviour was very restrictive. Party opinion on the truce was far too focused on the high politics of the situation and not the practical realities facing the voters. How could it be possible to convince the electorate to vote at that moment in time for political opponents by convincing them it was their duty to do so, but, then hope to win the voter back in the event of a general election by convincing them to change their vote once again? Some delegates clearly had their mind on the future. While the maintenance of the truce was reluctantly accepted as being important at that moment, there was a question of what sacrifices were required and how it would affect the party's future prospects.

In the aftermath of the conference, at the next meeting of the SEC, it was agreed by the committee members to continue to follow the existing policy that candidates would only be

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 148.

endorsed in exceptional circumstances.<sup>58</sup> This could also be due to the continued feelings of resentment towards the truce at a local government level. A motion on the subject appeared on the agenda of the Scottish Council of the Labour party annual conference held that September.<sup>59</sup> The Scottish branch of the party was not directly involved in the decision-making process relating to the truce, but it felt that it should have a say in the management of a truce at local government level, which directly affected the politics that it was engaged with. The fact that the same provisions were not made for local government elections as were made for parliamentary by-elections was something that actually caused resentment with the operation of the electoral truce. There was some disagreement and uncertainty about expectations of behaviour. This has very rarely been considered and was actually pertinent to the operation of the truce. While local government elections were not officially held, there were complaints about the behaviour of the Unionists in certain local areas in placing its party members into seats that had been Labour held.<sup>60</sup> Labour felt the democratic deficit in local politics where no elections at all could be held was a grave concern for the maintenance of the party and the morale of supporters. However, little concern was displayed regarding local level matters by all the coalition parties' central management. Nonetheless, it was the level at which more party activists were engaged than the inside dealings of high politics.

Gaining a Scottish Labour party perspective on the truce in 1943 becomes more difficult as the records for the Scottish Executive Committee end in 1942, and 1943 proved to be a year

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<sup>58</sup> LPA, minutes of meeting of the SEC, 6 June 1942.

<sup>59</sup> LPA, SEC Files, report of the 27<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Scottish Council of the Labour party, 19 September 1942.

<sup>60</sup> LPA, minutes of meeting of the SEC, 18 April 1942.

where the Labour party had a continually difficult relationship with the truce. Yet, again it was included as an item on the agenda of the 1943 Annual Conference.<sup>61</sup> The Elections sub-committee made it clear that it would be placing before the conference a strong case for maintaining the truce as it was in the national interest.<sup>62</sup> In order to calm members and appeal to reason before the conference, the committee sent out a two-page circular to all secretaries of affiliated organisations detailing in-depth the reasons for the truce and why it should continue:

‘The NEC desires to make its view plain to all affiliated organisations. The consequences of a wrong decision on this issue are far more considerable than is generally realised.’<sup>63</sup>

The document outlined the history of the truce and its operation both before and during the coalition, emphasising that the truce was crucial to ensure effective governance within the coalition. Furthermore, it was stated that both the coalition and the truce would continue until the end of hostilities, or if the conduct of the government became ‘too lethargic for war purposes’ –which was a fairly vague statement.<sup>64</sup> Labour was conveying that it was not only the Conservatives that could place country before party and indeed in the circular it was mentioned ‘the consideration of mere party interests is not a sufficient cause for breaking the electoral truce.’ As Crowcroft has argued, Attlee in particular was keen to ensure that nothing, not even the future interests of the party, could be used as a reason for

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<sup>61</sup> LPA, NEC minutes 1943, minutes of meeting of elections sub-committee, 7 April 1943.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> LPA, NEC Files, circular from J.S. Middleton, Organising Secretary, to secretaries of all affiliated organisations, 12 May 1943.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

breaking the truce.<sup>65</sup> Notably, the circular was carefully peppered throughout with references to the truce as 'electoral,' but the point was thoroughly enforced by the inclusion of the text of the electoral truce agreed in September 1939. There was a statement underneath which read:

It will be noted that the agreement is solely concerned with the refusal to nominate candidates in by-elections...As an instrument it lays down no other line of conduct for the parties subscribing to it and is no sense a 'political truce.' The activities of political parties if limited at all are determined by other considerations amongst which are responsibilities and obligations made by their policies before and during the war. The Labour party claims perfect freedom to make its own contribution to parliamentary and democratic public discussion.<sup>66</sup>

The statement was intriguing, it emphasised that the truce was purely electoral and that the by-election 'coupon statement' did not make the truce 'political'. Yet, the statement about 'other responsibilities and obligations,' would certainly refer to the coupon statement forced through the 1942 annual conference at Attlee's behest. It was as though the party was trying to make it part of the truce and not an addition which had become necessary for the truce to survive. Indeed, the addendum debated at the previous year's conference was entirely glossed over in the circular. This attempt by the Labour Party to claim that the truce was the same as it had been at its conception was stretching the truth of the matter to the limit.

The party, and indeed Attlee himself, came under pressure on the subject of the truce at the 1943 annual conference. The most vicious attack he received on the subject came from the

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<sup>65</sup> Crowcroft, *Attlee's War*, pp. 134-5.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

MP for the Scottish Universities, Sinclair Shaw. He asserted that the statement made by Attlee on the consequences for national unity and the war effort if the truce was broken was false. He used the examples of Canada and the USA holding general elections since the outbreak of war which had not affected their national unity.<sup>67</sup> Attlee hit back and asked the conference to reject the motion to end the current coalition government and stated that it would be foolish to go to the country with the electoral register in its current form and to expect a socialist majority. He did discount the possibility of a coupon election outright – a major concern for the party rank and file – but was very clear that there was little to be gained by calling an election at that point.<sup>68</sup>

As much as the rank and file of the party were irritated with the truce and the restrictions that came with it, the vote on the continuation of the government and the truce was won by 2,243,000 votes to 374,000.<sup>69</sup> Which, as Crowcroft points out, was almost a complete reversal of the results of the vote held on the truce in 1942. This showed that the Labour party grudgingly accepted the truce in light of so few alternative courses of action.<sup>70</sup> The consistent subtle changes Labour made to the truce over the course of 1942-43 showed that the party were forced by political circumstances to adjust the scope of the *idea* of the truce and not the original document. The first two years of the war saw the Unionists and Liberals mould their interpretations of the truce to suit party circumstances, the middle years were Labour's turn to adjust the terms to aid the party to maintain the coalition. Labour's grassroots members caused the problems in by-elections so the party had to mould the political circumstances to try to quell this rebellion. On the surface it would have been the

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<sup>67</sup> 1943 Labour Party Annual Conference Report, (London, 1943), p. 172.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid p. 173

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 134.

<sup>70</sup> Crowcroft, *Attlee's War*, p. 169.

sensible solution for the coalition parties to just adjust the actual truce documentation to reflect the changed political circumstances. Instead parties simply tampered with the 'informal truce' or the varying interpretations which parties had applied to the truce since its conception. However, this would have defeated the real purpose of the electoral truce which was to create a restriction which few people truly understood in practice allowing it to become a scapegoat for inter-party issues. By not having a written document which stated implicitly what the parties were permitted to do within the bounds of the truce, the vague constant changing expectations allowed political parties to bend the rules depending on the circumstances. It also gave them a convenient culprit to blame for organisational inactivity or difficulties which arose.

### **The End is in Sight**

When 1944 arrived for the Labour party, it may have hoped that the problems experienced with the truce in the previous two years had finally been resolved. These were unfortunately disappointed hopes as discontentment remained within party regarding the truce. This time it was not its survival which was the issue, but when it would end, and what the future held for the party. The problems with the truce began early in 1944 when the loss of the Skipton by-election on 7 January rocked the government.<sup>71</sup> The fact that a member of the local Labour party had resigned to stand as an independent candidate caused the party an even bigger concern. This situation hastened Labour's chief whip William Whiteley to attend an NEC meeting to discuss the truce. Whiteley called for greater unity of action in future by-elections, and the national agent asked permission to speak to his opposite

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<sup>71</sup> Brooke, *Labour's War*, p. 69.

numbers to gauge an idea of how to deal with truce breakers in constituencies.<sup>72</sup> This was a rather ironic move considering it was Labour who had the most trouble out of all the political parties in keeping its constituency parties in line, there was probably little to be learned from the other parties' experiences.

For the Labour party in Scotland, the threat was not coming from the Common Wealth party or rogue independent Labour candidates but from the SNP. The party were set to contest the Kirkcaldy by-election in this increasingly tense period for both the government and the Labour party. The Secretary of State for Scotland, Thomas Johnston, had continually warned the government about the danger of Scottish nationalism and his concerns were not heeded as much as they perhaps should have been.<sup>73</sup> The truce plus general wartime difficulties in encouraging political engagement had meant that the organisation of the Scottish Labour party was significantly poorer than pre-war. There were several local issues in Kirkcaldy that also caused support to move away from the government candidate — such as the transference of Scottish female labour to England. Labour was challenged by the SNP candidate Douglas Young who proposed to place local and Scottish issues above national issues, provoking Labour that it was unable to promise this.<sup>74</sup> As the Labour candidate was also the government candidate, he could not offer quite the same message as there was national unity and the truce to consider. The full details of this by-election will be covered in chapter four. However, the appeal to local issues clearly helped the SNP and the final result was a very close call for the Labour party, winning by 8268 votes to Young's 6621, or 52% to 41%.<sup>75</sup> The Labour party had survived, but barely. The comments in the press afterwards

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<sup>72</sup> LPA, NEC Files, Minutes of the Elections sub-committee, 25 February 1944.

<sup>73</sup> Harvie, 'Labour and Scottish Government' pp. 10-11.

<sup>74</sup> Douglas Young, *To the Electors of Kirkcaldy Burghs*, (Kirkcaldy, 1944.)

<sup>75</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 639.

suggested that there existed a sense of apathy towards the government in Scotland and a lack of support for the idea of the truce.<sup>76</sup>

The near miss at Kirkcaldy and the controversy instigated by the breaking of the truce in the West Derbyshire by-election, caused the Labour party to hold an emergency meeting to discuss the truce, the coalition government and the future.<sup>77</sup> However, the truce was discussed alongside the issue of future electoral independence, which as noted by Crowcroft, was a grave error on the part of Emanuel Shinwell, the Labour party chairman.<sup>78</sup>

The reason being that Attlee had previously made it clear that the truce would continue for the duration of the war. Crowcroft argues that the party executive was reluctant to end the coalition and return to open electioneering.<sup>79</sup> Given Churchill's popularity as a war leader, this was understandable. However, as the backlash against both the truce and Conservative government candidates in by-elections continued throughout 1944, it appeared that opinion was moving against the Conservatives. The results of the meeting were a few tenuous statements that the future of the coalition should be open for discussion and any amendment to be made to the electoral truce would need to be discussed between Labour cabinet ministers and their colleagues.<sup>80</sup>

As far as the NEC were concerned the matter was settled for the moment, it allowed it to communicate any decisions to the localities who were eager for the truce to end and to fight the next election as an independent force. Afterwards a batch of election literature

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<sup>76</sup> *The Scotsman*, 19 February 1944.

<sup>77</sup> Charles White, a member of the local Labour party, resigned from the party and stood against the Conservative National Government candidate as an Independent Labour candidate. He was refused the Labour whip in parliament. See Brooke, *Labour's War*, p. 68 for more details.

<sup>78</sup> Crowcroft, *Attlee's War*, p. 183.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> LPA, NEC Files 1944, notes of meeting of the NEC and Herbert Morrison, 26-27 February 1944.

was distributed with statements from Attlee that he wanted organisations to start considering a recruitment drive and that he wanted the party to be ready for the future.<sup>81</sup> Several Scottish branches of the party received this news warmly and began to plan for both the end of the truce and the coming general election. The Merchiston ward (Edinburgh) of the Labour party reformed in April 1944 with the first meeting considering how to best prepare for the end of the electoral truce.<sup>82</sup> Two branches in the Scottish Borders, Galashiels and Hawick, reported that they were planning recruitment drives and an election fund.<sup>83</sup> Clearly the grassroots members in Scotland believed that the party was aiming to free itself from the truce and coalition as soon as the war was over.

The other interrelated issue that the party had to contend with was whether to accept Communist and Common Wealth party offers of forming a left unity coalition. The NEC organisation sub-committee produced a lengthy report on the issue and made several important points. One of the reasons it was reluctant to form a coalition was not only because it believed both the Communists and the Common Wealth parties to be untrustworthy and unreliable, but because it was afraid that the Conservatives may form a bloc with the Liberals.<sup>84</sup> Labour did not want to leave the electoral truce only to find it faced the Conservative and Liberals united in a coupon election.

Instead of being held in the spring, the 1944 annual conference was postponed until December 1944. This allowed the NEC ample time to decide how to deal with the thorny issue of the end of the truce, the coalition government and also when a general election

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<sup>81</sup>LPA, series of loose leaflets contained in the NEC minutes of meeting from 22 March 1943.

<sup>82</sup>NLS, Dep.203, minutes of inaugural meeting of the Merchiston Labour party, 11 April 1944.

<sup>83</sup>NLS, Acc.4145/1, minutes of meeting of the Roxburgh district Labour parties, 7 May 1944.

<sup>84</sup>LPA, NEC Files elections and organisation sub-committee June-July 1944, memorandum on 'left unity', 5 July 1944.

would take place. The NEC held a special meeting at end of October to discuss the details. The party had submitted a circular to all branches earlier that month stating that the party would not be fighting a 'coupon' election and would fight it as an independent party. Ellen Wilkinson, Chair of the NEC, had remarked that this had been very well received across the country as branches enjoyed the thought of being able to take more independent action without any restrictions.<sup>85</sup> The implication in her statement being that localities were looking forward to being free of the restraints of the electoral truce which had assisted in the demise of many branches of the party. The tensions between the expectations of the locality parties and the management of the Labour party continued in the annual conference. The party was placed under pressure to ensure that the coalition did not have to be ended by the holding of a special annual conference. One member suggested that the provisional notice had already been given and that no further special conference or arrangements were required to give further notice to the end of the coalition.<sup>86</sup> The frustrations with the coalition and the truce were prevalent at the conference within many levels of the party.

These continued into 1945 as it essentially became a waiting game until the war ended and the truce was finally terminated. There was however to be one last throw of the electoral truce dice before the game was finally over. In April 1945 the seat of Motherwell was contested by the Labour 'government candidate,' and the SNP party leader Dr Robert McIntyre. Despite a tight contest between the Unionists and Labour in the last General Election in 1935, the Unionists duly stuck to the terms of the truce and did not field a

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<sup>85</sup> LPA, minutes of meeting of the NEC 29-30 October 1944.

<sup>86</sup> *Labour Annual Conference Report 1944*, p. 113.

candidate.<sup>87</sup> Because of Labour's indications throughout 1944 that it planned to end the electoral truce and the coalition government as soon as the war in Germany was over, there was little point in the campaign focusing on issues of national unity. Instead the Labour candidate Alex Anderson ran on a wholly Labour programme and even the newspapers reported on the contest being a socialist versus a Scottish nationalist.<sup>88</sup> Labour's Ernest Bevin made a speech on 8 April 1945, just four days before the election, in which he declared that there were sharp party differences in government and thus the coalition had largely exhausted its usefulness.<sup>89</sup> The speech's implications certainly would not endear any Unionists in the district to support the so-called government candidate. The full details of the election will be discussed in chapter four, however, the final result was an extremely narrow victory for the SNP securing 51% of the vote to 48% for Labour.<sup>90</sup> The consensus was that the new voters added to the register at the start of the year plus McIntyre's campaign appealing to Scottish grievances against Westminster aided the SNP's victory. The attitude of Labour towards the truce and the coalition was also seen as a major error, *The Glasgow Herald* featured some astute analysis of the situation and blamed Ernest Bevin's indication at the Labour party conference that the truce would soon be at an end:

Two or three years ago the truce would have given him a walkover...Conservatives would loyally have voted Labour in considerable numbers but they have taken the hint. They could not oppose but they could abstain. A total poll of 22353 in an electorate of 41035 – little more than 50% is sufficient proof of widespread apathy.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> FWS Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 640.

<sup>88</sup> *The Scotsman*, 7 April 1945.

<sup>89</sup> *The Scotsman*, 9 April 1945.

<sup>90</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 640.

<sup>91</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 16 April 1945.

The fact that Labour alienated Unionist support may have aided McIntyre in his achievement. As the *Herald* notes, if this had been 1943 or even 1944, party members of the others in the coalition would have voted in support. But on this occasion Labour was seen as having betrayed the goodwill of the Unionists and its members showed their disapproval most strongly.

The end of the electoral truce was portrayed in the media as being the fault of Labour as it wanted to be able to fight a general election as an independent party.<sup>92</sup> This is also the general consensus in the historiography. However, Robert Crowcroft has argued that it was manoeuvring by Herbert Morrison and several other senior Labour party members that actually ended the truce rather than Attlee.<sup>93</sup> Both Churchill and Attlee were hoping to prolong the life of the coalition and the truce in order to defeat Japan. However, Attlee was under enormous pressure from his party to end the coalition and fight a general election. Crowcroft argues that the problem in the historiography is that the deeper background to the ending of the coalition has not been examined.<sup>94</sup> The consensual political environment was seen as a more productive atmosphere for the parties to operate in and the thought of returning to party politics was not welcomed. Churchill sent letters to Attlee and Archibald Sinclair requesting a continuation of the coalition. However, the Labour party conference was due to be held, so Churchill addressed the letter to the NEC so it could be debated in the conference.<sup>95</sup> Unfortunately for Attlee, the opinion of the conference went against him and an overwhelming majority rejected the continuation of the coalition until the end of the

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<sup>92</sup> Chief amongst them were the pro-Unionist *Scotsman* and *Glasgow Herald* who ran the statement in several headlines.

<sup>93</sup> Crowcroft, *Attlee's War*, p. 208-9.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p. 209.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 210.

Japanese war.<sup>96</sup> Shortly afterwards, the coalition and the electoral truce which had caused the party so much difficulty over the duration of the war were finally over.

It is unfortunate that in terms of evidence, examining a truly Scottish perspective to the Labour parties' ideas on the truce in the final years was difficult as the SEC minutes that existed for the earlier years have not been retained. It has made understanding the relationship the Scottish branch of the party had with the truce more difficult. However, what was clear in the final years of the truce was that the Scottish Labour party was far less focused on potential truce-breaking issues and more focused on rebuilding its organisation in preparation for the truce being over. The evidence within minor constituency party records suggested that from the spring of 1944 members believed the truce would not survive the end of the war in Europe, and the party needed to be far better prepared.<sup>97</sup> Christopher Harvie noted the poor organisational state of the Scottish Labour party in 1944, and that Labour Headquarters at Transport House showed little concern.<sup>98</sup> The Scottish branches of the party were left trying to operate in an environment where they had no say over the conditions of the truce. The branches had previously displayed reluctance to follow Attlee's line of supporting Unionist government candidates which in some areas would be abhorrent to its membership.<sup>99</sup> The efforts of central party to adjust the terms of the truce fell flat in Scotland. When the party had to contest two by-elections in 1944 and 1945, its previous reluctance to support Unionist candidates rebounded upon the party as Labour fell victim to low turnouts and received little support from Unionists members'. Labour's focus on rebuilding its party and side-lining the truce was potentially the reason why it almost lost in

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<sup>96</sup> *Labour Party Annual Conference Report 1945*, p. 87.

<sup>97</sup> See NLS, Acc.4148, Roxburgh and Selkirk Labour party and Dep.203 Merchiston branch of the Labour party minutes for more details.

<sup>98</sup> Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland', p. 935.

<sup>99</sup> LPA, minutes of the SEC, 18 April 1942.

Kirkcaldy, and a direct contributory factor to its loss in Motherwell. For the party in Scotland, the truce had proved to be a very difficult issue to contend with. It was seen as a restrictive stranglehold on the operation of politics and had encouraged minor parties like the SNP and ILP to control the socialist and left-wing message.

### **A Powerless Party**

For the Liberal party, the years 1942-1943 exacerbated further the difficulties experienced by the party in terms of both the truce and a significant lack of party organisation. Thorpe has noted that, nationally, Liberal discontent with the truce was gathering momentum from mid-1941. Yet, the leadership of the party had refused to allow the truce to be debated at any conference.<sup>100</sup> The party in England had to contend with the emergence of the Common Wealth party from a group of disaffected Liberals led by Sir Richard Acland, which caused a further threat to the organisation's already depleted membership and grassroots support. However, the Scottish Liberals faced less of a threat from the Common Wealth party as it never gained much ground in Scotland. 1942 saw the party attempt to increase Liberal party propaganda and to ensure that its party message was being heard.

Despite the party management's refusal to debate the truce, the SLF still attempted to submit a resolution on the subject of the 'party truce' at the annual party assembly held in the summer of 1942.<sup>101</sup> The resolution on the party truce was not mentioned again by the SLF, but, the subject was raised by a Welsh branch at the party assembly. The former Liberal MP for Dorset, Emlyn-Jones stated that the electoral truce was harmful to parliamentary democracy and that it was working for disunity rather than unity.<sup>102</sup> Emlyn-Jones was

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<sup>100</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 230.

<sup>101</sup> NLS Acc.11765/14, minutes of meeting of the executive of the SLF, 29 April 1942.

<sup>102</sup> *The Times*, 18 June 1942.

persuaded to remove the resolution on the truce after being placated by the chairman, Lord Meston, that members of the national council should discuss the motion with Sinclair.

Interestingly, Meston was reported in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* in September 1941 saying, 'I think that pretty soon we shall have to demonstrate our resentment of being cold shouldered by the other parties – party truce or no party truce.'<sup>103</sup> Although Meston's own attitude towards the truce was not always positive, it was vital for party unity to calm delegates' discussion on the subject. Thorpe concurs that during 1942 there was a great deal of apathy from the Liberals towards the truce and also towards the lax leadership of the party.<sup>104</sup>

The interconnected relationship between the truce and party management was understandable in the case of the Liberals. It had self-sacrificed so much that by 1942 it was struggling to maintain the organisation. The chronic decline the Scottish Liberals experienced in the period leading up to the war was exacerbated by its attitude towards the truce and limits it had placed on party activity in the early years. During 1942, the ever-resourceful Lady Glen-Coats continued upon her quest to rally interest in the organisation. Even she struggled against the apathy and lack of interest she found within the constituency associations to undertake political work or to find suitable candidates.<sup>105</sup>

During 1943, the party continued to raise questions regarding the electoral truce at the Scottish annual conference as the issue was still anathema at national level. The following resolution was passed unanimously at the autumn conference held in September 1943:

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<sup>103</sup> *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 11 September 1941.

<sup>104</sup> Thorpe, p. 230-1.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

This council while recognising that at present the supreme national interest is the successful prosecution of the war and that a national government of all parties is best fitted to that end, nevertheless believes that at the earliest possible moment after the cessation of hostilities in Europe the electoral truce should cease... The council further affirms the belief that the best interests of the country will be served by returning to the traditional political system of this country based on an open election uninfluenced by any party arrangement or agreements.

The sentiment of the resolution indicated to Sinclair that the Scottish Liberals did not want to be tied into the electoral truce any further beyond what was absolutely necessary. It felt that any other arrangement would not follow Liberal ideals and allow the electorate a free choice. In SLF's opinion there was to be no re-run of the coupon election of 1918. The fact that it referred to the truce as 'electoral' in the resolution was unusual as it was commonly referred to as the 'party truce' by the SLF. Yet, it was not surprising, considering the party were moving away from the narrow interpretation of the truce and noting the broader implications of its existence. This is yet more evidence that the truce terminology was often moulded to suit the political circumstances.

By 1944 the Liberals had to contend with a rising discontent at grassroots level with the LPO. The leadership of the Liberals under Archibald Sinclair received some scrutiny in 1943 as his increasing absence and continuing dedication to his role at the air ministry riled many within the party. Thorpe noted that pleas increased for Sir Percy Harris – the party chief whip and deputy leader — to challenge Sinclair for the leadership, but an attempt did not occur despite the continual grumblings.<sup>106</sup> However, this discontent while not acted upon in terms

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<sup>106</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 51.

of a leadership challenge, was expressed widely within the party. Thorpe noted that coded criticism of Sinclair was not difficult to find despite the continued resolutions passed in support of his leadership.<sup>107</sup> The Scottish Liberal Federation was no exception to this phenomenon. There was a growing fear within the party that Sinclair intended to tie the Liberals into a post-war coalition with the Conservatives, and memories of the post First World War coupon election were clearly still embedded in the memory of party members.<sup>108</sup>

Some members of the SLF had a chance to challenge Sinclair directly about the truce when he made a visit to Edinburgh in February 1944 to attend a reception organised by Lady Glen-Coats. It was reported in the *Scotsman* that the Chairman of the SLF, Douglas McDonald, said the Liberals must not go further than the original terms of the truce. He also noted that the initial agreement had been made with the Chamberlain Government, not the Churchill government of which they were a part. It was suggested that while the Liberals maintained some level of loyalty to the government, that party politics must not become part of the truce agreement.<sup>109</sup> The next month at a similar meeting held in London, Sinclair declared that the electoral truce was 'an indispensable sacrifice by all parties on the altar of victory.' He also stated that he understood the frustrations and as a party politician he shared them. He declared that while he was leader he had no intention of allowing the Liberals to lose its independence.<sup>110</sup> This was an attempt to reassure the party, but confirmed that he was not about to make any rash decisions in relation to ending the truce and allowing the Liberals to revert to party politics before the end of the war. Nevertheless, he had at least

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p. 233.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> *Scotsman*, 24 February 1944.

<sup>110</sup> *Scotsman*, 16 March 1944.

acknowledged the intention of the Liberals to be an independent force in the post-war election.

Interestingly, in his speech Sinclair used the term 'electoral truce' for the most part, but when he stated that the government could not survive the denunciation of the truce he switched to the term 'party truce.'<sup>111</sup> This may have been a slip of the tongue as the conflation of the terms 'electoral', 'political' and 'party' for the truce was clearly established by this stage of the war. The fact that he mentioned the terrible consequences on the political environment of the country if the 'party' truce ended, may well have been Sinclair displaying an unconscious bias that the ending of the truce would bring an end to a stable political environment. He then discussed that very subject in the remainder of his speech, confirming that no matter what Sinclair declared, his own ideas about the truce were far greater than a purely electoral arrangement.

By April 1945, when it became apparent the war in Europe was soon to reach a conclusion, there was growing concern about the truce and when it would be terminated. As noted above, Sinclair indicated during 1944 that the Liberals would fight the next election as an independent force and would not remain in the coalition any longer than necessary. Despite this reassurance, there was an uncertain moment in May 1945 after VE day when Churchill wrote to Sinclair with a proposal to extend the truce and the coalition until the end of hostilities in Japan. In the letter there is the suggestion that Sinclair may have privately acknowledged that the Liberals could stay in the coalition until at least the autumn.<sup>112</sup> Churchill was conscious of the nation's opinion on the subject and proposed that they

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Churchill Archive Online, (CAO,) CHAR 20/194A/26-28, Letter from Winston Churchill to Archibald Sinclair, 18 May 1945 accessed 12-10-2018.

consider the means by which the public could express this, one option being a referendum on the subject.<sup>113</sup> Sinclair refused to accept the offer, which Churchill graciously if reluctantly accepted stating 'we are all puppets of fate.'<sup>114</sup> Once again this suggested that Sinclair personally may have been inclined to agree with his friend, but knew the party would not be so accommodating. The electoral truce was finally at an end allowing the Liberals to fight an election as the independent party it had craved to be.

The Liberals' attitude towards the truce and the effect it had on the party in the final years of the war can be summed up perfectly by the Chief Whip Sir Percy Harris.

Up until 1944 it was almost impossible to persuade Liberals to take any active interest in party politics or even to consider adopting candidates, it was not until 1945 there was any real awakening of activity in the Liberal constituencies.<sup>115</sup>

Harris's sentiments were echoed by Lady Glen-Coats in her mission to encourage the constituency branches across Scotland to resume normal party activity. The shutdown of party activity at the beginning of the war had significantly damaged Liberal organisations. The narrow interpretation the Liberals applied to the truce in terms of what political activity it was able to undertake led to party members being unsure of exactly what purpose meeting as a party served. The failure of the Liberal Party Organisation to allow the truce to be debated at the National Assembly caused this uncertainty to grow and spread. As was noted in the previous chapter, even the chairman of the SLF was unaware of exactly what the terms of the truce meant, and as a result was unable to give advice to the minor

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> CAO, CHAR/20/194A/49, Letter from Churchill to Sinclair, 26 May 1945.

<sup>115</sup> Roy Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party, 1895-1970* (London, 1971), p. 249.

branches across the country.<sup>116</sup> The fact that the Liberals in Scotland never had to fight a by-election during the war meant that there was little need to keep branches in operation for that purpose. Lady Glen-Coats' diligent attempts to engage local associations failed despite her considerable wealth, influence and mobility. There was also little engagement or guidance from the LPO given to the SLF. As noted above, the SLF quite often clashed with the LPO regarding the differences of opinion on the direction of policy and the truce. When considering Thorpe's analysis of English and Welsh Liberal constituency branches, the SLF appear to have been more industrious in terms of meetings and challenging the central party authority.<sup>117</sup> Unfortunately, it was still not enough to prevent Scottish Liberal representation being entirely wiped out in 1945.

### **The Forward March of the Minor Parties**

For the minor political parties in Scotland, the middle years of the war were a golden opportunity to make inroads electorally and gain support. The continuation of the truce and coalition government left the political scene fairly stagnant. Therefore, every opportunity for publicity or to contend a by-election in order to increase their support base was often eagerly grasped by minor parties. In terms of the parties involved, there was little change to the ILP's policy, it continued to abhor Labour's insistence on remaining in the coalition and upholding the truce.<sup>118</sup> The Communists' ideas had changed by Russia's entry to the war in 1941. There was far less hostility displayed by the Communist party towards both the truce and the government. Indeed, the Communists became vocal advocates for party co-operation. For the

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<sup>116</sup> Acc.11765/14, minutes of SLF executive, 25 November 1939.

<sup>117</sup> Thorpe, pp. 221-43.

<sup>118</sup> *The Scotsman*, 26 April 1943.

SNP there was a dramatic shift in 1942 when the party split and some members left to form the Scottish Convention.<sup>119</sup> The Scottish Convention will not be discussed in this chapter as it was not a political party but merely a pressure group. The SNP spent the middle years refining its policy and re-established more radical credentials, becoming more openly anti-government. The Common Wealth party will also briefly be considered as it attempted to build support in Scotland, it held several public meetings and also fielded a candidate at the North Midlothian by-election in 1943. The party will not, however, receive the same level of attention as it has in other studies because its effect in Scotland was limited. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Scotland already had three minor parties on the left of the political spectrum which meant that the party's potential support base was limited.

The final two years of the truce presented minor parties with an opportunity to ready their organisations for the coming general election, but also to offer one last challenge to the truce. There was a clear difference in the way the Communists, the ILP and the SNP operated in Scotland during the final two years. For the Communists and ILP their biggest concern was encouraging Labour to abandon the truce and be an independent political party to which they hoped to be affiliated. Much of their focus surrounded that issue. Whereas for the SNP, it was one last opportunity to enter the electoral arena with fewer competitors and allow the party to challenge the truce, the government and to spread its message. The three minor parties in Scotland may have been left-wing in political ideology, but their party ideology was entirely different.

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<sup>119</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, pp. 230-1.

### **The Communist Conundrum**

The years 1942-43 saw a continuation of the Communist party's new strategy. The previous chapter left the Communists with its credibility in question given the party's changed opinion on the war following the German invasion of the Soviet Union. The party had reversed its anti-war policy and gave wholehearted support to the war and the coalition government.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, a circular was issued by the party headquarters to all branches shortly after Russia was invaded which gave the following advice on by-elections and the truce:

...the putting forward of freak candidates and place seekers at by-elections, let our party show that it stands out as the champion of a real national unity...the interests of the people and a nation, this is what will govern our decisions in any future by-election.<sup>121</sup>

The Communist position on the electoral truce was continually supportive, indeed it argued for the maintenance of the truce with a conformist's zeal. It viewed the incursion of independent candidates into by-elections with increasing alarm. The party made statements in the press proposing the following idea:

Recent by-election election results will compel the government not only to reconsider the whole of its policy but also the present form of the electoral truce, and especially the character of the candidates who are selected as representatives of national unity...The Communist party demands that in all future by-elections the candidates

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<sup>120</sup> Harry Pollitt, *Unity for Victory in 1942*, retrieved from the Marxist Internet Archive, 09-12-2018. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/pollitt/1942/05/unity-victory.htm>

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

shall be selected by the agreement of all parties and organisations in the constituency supporting national unity, including the Communist party.<sup>122</sup>

However, the suggestion was not considered by the coalition government, now that the party was on the side of the war, it was one less small party to be concerned about interfering in by-elections. The government may not have paid much attention to the party, but another small party did, namely the ILP, and associated socialist body the Workers International League. There ensued a propaganda war between the Communists and the ILP for the duration of the war in attempting to secure the status as the voice of the workers. Countless pamphlets were produced by both sides with a lot of emphasis placed on the Communists' support for the truce and the coalition as being a betrayal of the workers, and that only independent action would prevail.<sup>123</sup>

Despite the Communists' support for the coalition and the electoral truce during 1942-43, there was little progress made by the party in defining a role in the national political landscape. In Scotland, it was aided by sympathetic trade unions and the holding of regular public meetings in the industrial areas of the Central Belt. This support base allowed them to maintain a stronger presence in the Scottish political scene than the Communists did nationally.<sup>124</sup> Unfortunately, the party's support for the truce and the government meant that it could not command the pacifist or anti-war vote that it had been able to take advantage of pre-1942. The Communists' decision not to contend by-elections also meant the party rather exited the stage in terms of publicity or propaganda-spreading opportunities when any contest was fought. The fact that the party retained more influence in Scotland during a

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> *The Communist Party and the War, Look at their Record!* (London, 1942).

<sup>124</sup> Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, (London, 1992,) pp. 70-71.

period in which its stature nationally was declining indicated that aspects of Scottish politics was subtly different to that of British politics. The focus for the Communist party during the final two years of the war was on the coming general election and its continued determination to seek affiliation to the Labour party. The issue of supporting the government and the electoral truce were also issues which continued to demand the party's attention. An undated letter sent by the Communist party to the Conservatives, Liberals and Labour Parties – but is likely to have been sent around late 1943/early 1944 – pleaded with the parties to reconsider their view on the Communists' solution of presenting a unity candidate at any by-election which best represented the constituency regardless of party.<sup>125</sup> The Communists framed its argument as a way to circumvent the frustration felt by the electorate at their inability to change their local representative and reinvigorate government and parliament. However, once again this idea failed to interest any of the other parties. While the coalition parties were not entirely satisfied with the truce, the thought of having more Communist MPs was surely a prospect they wished to avoid.

In 1945 the Communists changed its stance yet again. It stopped promoting the truce and the government, instead issuing a statement in March 1945 which attacked the Conservatives and moderated any support previously given while the Conservatives were part of the coalition government:

National Unity has been essential for the winning of the war and will be more essential in the winning of the peace...but it must take new forms, corresponding to the political advance of the people...to end Tory dominance in parliament will be no easy task, it

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<sup>125</sup> LPA, Communist Party of Great Britain Archives, (CPGBA) CP/Cent/EC/01/01, draft letter written to Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties, undated.

will demand a great campaign and the ending of some Labour leaders to electoral unity which plays right onto the hands of reactionary Tory elements.<sup>126</sup>

The party showed once again the shifting sands of its priorities: Firstly, it had been anti-war and anti-truce until 1941. Secondly, it was pro-electoral truce and coalition government to support Russia and ensure allied victory. Finally, it was pro-electoral unity with Labour to ensure a progressive socialist government. When the party announced its general election strategy, it placed emphasis on the need to replace the Unionists with a government of national unity – not including the Unionists and therefore non-unified. The Communists' reasoning was that the present government's policies were not compatible with the current public opinion.<sup>127</sup> The attitude of the party showed the way in which the truce had changed the operation of politics for the duration of the war. The fact that a party like the Communists could support a government lead by a Conservative Prime Minister for three years was a unique anomaly, the electoral truce truly made strange bedfellows. By 1945 the Communists were slowly moving away from this never repeated stance back towards a more traditional position supporting Labour.

Tracing a truly Scottish perspective on the Communist party was difficult due to a lack of material in terms of party records. However, the effect of the truce on the Communist party as a whole has not been considered fully. The fact that party membership in Scotland had increased during the war and that the only constituency to retain a Scottish MP in 1945 was a Scottish constituency suggests the Communists still maintained some influence as a political force in Scotland.<sup>128</sup> However, its change in attitude towards the electoral truce in the middle

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<sup>126</sup> CPGBA, CP/Cent/EC/01/01, draft statement of the Executive Committee, 17 March 1945.

<sup>127</sup> CPGBA, Communist party statement on national unity, 20 March 1945.

<sup>128</sup> Calder, *Myth of the Blitz*, pp. 69-70 & 77.

years of the war meant it limited itself to a side-line position in politics. As a minor party, it was not included in the coalition nor was it an active minor party in challenging by-elections. The Communists were excluded from the only two purposes it was able to have during the limited political engagement of the war years. Its political U-turns throughout the war resulted in the party not being taken seriously by the political establishment or the media where it was endlessly ridiculed. The war did not aid the Communist party either in Scotland or nationwide, the temporary increase in membership did not last into the post-war era leading to the party becoming increasingly redundant.

### **To be the ILP or a DLP?**

For the Communist's bitter rivals, the ILP, 1942-43 saw no change in its strategy of opposing the war, the coalition government or the electoral truce. Along with the SNP, The ILP was often the main opposition to government candidates in any Scottish by-election. It shared similarities to the Communists in being anti-fascist and pro-socialism, but also only appealing to the electorate in certain areas. Scotland remained a stronghold of the ILP, and the party's attitude towards the truce in the middle years of the war has not been as well considered in the historiography due to this fact. The focus for these years from a British perspective tends to be on the Common Wealth party as the bastion of left-wing appeal, mainly because of how well it did in English by-elections against government candidates. The ILP were further sidelined by the emergence of CW who the ILP initially welcomed, but the CW's dislike of the ILP's anti-war stance soon caused friction.<sup>129</sup> The ILP's three members of parliament remained firmly in opposition against the government, becoming some of the most vocal critics of the truce in the crucial middle years of the war. The Scottish branches of the ILP also had several

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<sup>129</sup> Thwaites, *Waiting for the Workers*, p. 130.

difficulties over the course of 1942. Firstly, party members had been manhandled and physically attacked by Communist sympathisers while selling its weekly newspaper the *New Leader*. The ILP's anti-government, anti-truce attitude was seen as a poor advert for the left-wing cause and the Communist party was not afraid to make known its displeasure at the ILP.<sup>130</sup> The ILP was also on the offensive, publishing propaganda against the Communist party. The Communists' attitude towards the electoral truce was one of the main points the ILP observed was inconsistent with the Communists' previous opinions.<sup>131</sup>

The ILP also had some internal quarrels, showing similarities with the coalition parties, as there was tension between the central party management and the Scottish branches. The clashes were often over decisions which better suited the individuality of the Scottish division or specific locality issues. Over the course of 1942 into 1943, the Glasgow Shettleston branch of the party often caused problems. In advance of the ILP's Scottish conference the branch made the following resolution:

On the political truce, until the Labour party adopts a socialist policy the ILP will fight where possible all the by-elections whether or not the coalition candidate is a Labour nominee.<sup>132</sup>

The use of the term 'political' truce in this instance, not only reflected the inter-changeable way the truce was referred to by this stage of the war, but it is also reflective of what the motion was regarding, namely the political policy of the Labour party. The party had quite often stated in resolutions, 'the truce,' giving it no individual characteristics at all. However, on this occasion the use of the term 'political truce,' would suggest that the coalition parties'

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<sup>130</sup> LPA, ILP NAC minutes, 7-8 February 1942.

<sup>131</sup> *The Communist Party and the War*.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

confusion and misuse of the term had begun to pervade the minor parties' interpretation of the truce.

The ILP continued to direct propaganda towards disgruntled Labour supporters who were unhappy at the ever-increasing co-operation between their party and the Conservatives and Liberals. The ILP was especially vocal around the Labour party conference of 1942 when the truce was being debated. The ILP announced that if Labour was willing to break the electoral truce, it would receive the party's full support.<sup>133</sup> However, Labour's narrow victory in accepting the continuation of the truce was a blow to the ILP, it had been hopeful of more unified action to bring about a socialist state. Unfortunately for the ILP, it did not manage to make any great breakthroughs during 1942-3 as it struggled to penetrate the political atmosphere which was heavily in favour of maintaining the status quo of the truce.

From 1944, the ILP's attitude towards the truce and the Labour party's maintenance of it hardened as likelihood of lasting to the end of the hostilities became a clear prospect. This did not prevent the party continually hoping for its revocation during the final two years of the war. At the annual conference in 1944, a motion was raised by the Bridgeton branch (James Maxton's constituency,) calling upon the Labour party to break the political truce and resume opposition.<sup>134</sup> One of the delegates commented that the political truce was becoming 'dangerous' and should be ended as soon as Germany was defeated and before the country were asked their views in an election.<sup>135</sup> The truce was seen increasingly to restrict political freedom, therefore the fact that it was referred to as the 'political truce,' by the ILP and not the 'electoral truce,' suggests growing frustration. The truce resolution was paired with

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<sup>133</sup> *The Scotsman*, 26 April 1943.

<sup>134</sup> *The Scotsman*, 11 April 1944.

<sup>135</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, 8 April 1944.

another resolution regarding the ILP's potential re-affiliation with the Labour party. The motion was carefully drafted to say that re-affiliation would only begin from the date when the Labour party withdrew from the coalition government and ended the electoral truce.<sup>136</sup> The vote for re-affiliation was not, however, a resounding victory, won by 89 votes to 72, suggesting there was still a hesitation in the party to end being an independent body. The ILP attempted to circumvent this problem by proclaiming that the party still wished to pursue ILP policy in parliament.

The Scottish branches of the ILP were in disagreement about the prospect of being re-affiliated with the Labour party. The Shettleston branch thought that energy should be directed towards building the ILP and that the whole re-affiliation process was unconstitutional. The Montrose branch was also sceptical about re-affiliation.<sup>137</sup> The party needed to ensure it had a back-up plan if the bid for re-affiliation failed. Shortly after the annual conference, the ILP announced it was planning to field fifty-seven candidates in the next general election, and eighteen of those would be Scottish seats. The Political Secretary of the ILP, Fenner Brockway, released a statement to the press stating the reason for the amount of candidates was as an insurance of a strong opposition if Labour decided to maintain the electoral truce.<sup>138</sup> The interchangeable terminology used to describe the truce depending on the circumstance is evident on this occasion, the term 'electoral' is used as the issue under discussion was an electoral matter. This concurs with the point made above about the party using the term to describe the truce as 'political' when it was a political matter under discussion. The constant interchangeable terminology suggests that the truce for all political

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<sup>136</sup> *The Scotsman*, 2 April 1944.

<sup>137</sup> LPA, ILP archive, minutes of meeting of the Shettleston branch, 20 November 1944.

<sup>138</sup> *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 22 May 1944.

parties was a malleable concept depending on the circumstance and the arguments they wished to communicate.

Of all the small parties, it appeared on the surface that the ILP had a greater ability to shun the atmosphere of consensus the electoral truce fostered and enter by-election contests. It was not beholden to the Comintern, or pro-electoral truce because of commitments to Russia like the Communists. Plus, it had the advantage over both the SNP and the Common Wealth party of being a longer established and well-known party. The anti-war, anti-conscription stance for the duration of the war allowed the ILP to gain voters in by-elections aligned with those views. Yet these surface appearances were deceptive, it was a small and underfunded party that did struggle like the SNP with favourable constituencies to mount a by-election challenge. Its determination to thwart a co-operative atmosphere which had been created by the truce was not always possible if the Scottish committee and the NAC considered entering an election would result in a potential loss of deposit. The truce restricted the ILP as much as it allowed it the opportunity to enter into contests unopposed. From 1942 to 1945, the party only entered one by-election out of six that were contested.<sup>139</sup> The contest at Glasgow Cathcart was not a resounding success with only 13.8% of the vote. The momentum that it had built in by-elections pre-1942 had fallen away because of the combination of factors mentioned earlier. For the ILP, the truce was a blessing and a curse. From 1942 to 1945 most of the attention the party gained was by making anti-government statements and not by challenging the government directly in an electoral contest.

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<sup>139</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 637

### The Breakthrough of the SNP

For the SNP, the period 1942-43 had a profound effect on the party. The long running issues between the pro and anti-war wings of the party finally culminated at the annual conference in May 1942. The hastening of the confrontation was caused by the announcement of a by-election in the Cathcart district of Glasgow in April 1942 with a Unionist government candidate.<sup>140</sup> It had been the perfect opportunity for the SNP to re-establish its credentials as a political party and to strike a blow at the electoral truce. There was perhaps the expectation that it could reiterate a similar narrative to the Argyll by-election two years earlier. The very pro-war candidate selected was William Whyte, and the language used in the campaign was very apologetic. There was an acknowledgement that the SNP did not want to break the truce. It cited the party's intervention into the campaign on the 'Tory party machine' which would not concede to the idea of Scottish self-government.<sup>141</sup> While anti-Unionist, the campaign was also very pro-Churchill to ensure no claims were directed towards the party that it was interrupting national unity. Whyte did not even stand as an official SNP candidate, but rather stood as an independent nationalist. This very muddled message and even more poorly executed campaign did not pay dividends. Whyte only managed to secure 1000 votes, one of the worst results for the party since its formation.<sup>142</sup> The contrast with the Argyll election in 1940 could not have been greater. As Richard Finlay has observed, the confused strategy was one of the main reasons the party failed so badly at Cathcart. The SNP had drawn the discontented anti-government supporters in Argyll when clearly making a stand against both the truce and a Unionist candidate, but this time it pushed neither message with any

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<sup>140</sup> Richard J. Finlay, 'The Inter-War years to the Mid-1960s' in Gerry Hassan, (ed.) *The Modern SNP: From Protest to Power* (Edinburgh, 2009), pp. 19-30, at p.25.

<sup>141</sup> Finlay, *Independent & Free*, p. 226.

<sup>142</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 637.

conviction.<sup>143</sup> It is easy to see why the party failed as there was no obvious group from which it could draw support, as the SNP were neither anti-government nor anti-truce enough to tempt voters. Within the party, the Cathcart incident was seen as the limit for MacCormick's electoral strategy and the scene was set for a stormy annual conference in May 1942. The Cathcart election was raised quickly as a point of discussion in the conference, when one member insisted that the party must re-consider the overall organisational strategy if its fortunes were to be revived after the disastrous result.<sup>144</sup> The antagonism between the opposing factions reached a pinnacle when the party officials were called for re-election. The party chairman, William Power – from the pro-war wing and trusted colleague of MacCormick – was narrowly defeated by Douglas Young.<sup>145</sup> This led to the anti-war branch essentially taking over the party and the moderates leaving to establish the Scottish Convention, a pressure group advocating Scottish home rule. The situation was naturally more complex than has been outlined above but a more in-depth discussion is not relevant to the subject matter under discussion in this chapter.<sup>146</sup> The party did not present any open challenges to the electoral truce in terms of fighting by-elections until 1944. Instead, it spent the remainder of 1943 attempting to shape both a political identity and policy from which to contend any future by-elections. The truce was less important in restricting the party's actions as it was far more limited by funding issues and party members' commitment. In general, the SNP's reaction to the truce in the year after the party split was more muted than at any other time during the war. The party's own internal concerns around policy were a far bigger concern.

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<sup>143</sup> Finlay, *Independent & Free*, p. 227.

<sup>144</sup> *The Scotsman*, 1 June 1942.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> See Finlay pp. 230-33, H.J Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism* (London 1969,) or Jack Brand, *The National Movement in Scotland* (London, 1979,) for a more in-depth analysis of the party split.

This changed by the later years, when the SNP policy on by-elections was finally formulated. It announced it would contest elections until a majority of Scottish representation, i.e. over half the Scottish seats in Westminster, were won.<sup>147</sup> The declaration of a by-election in the district of Kirkcaldy, Fife was the perfect opportunity to test the policy and make a stand against the truce and the government. The SNP had been angered by the policy of transferring Scottish female workers to English factories for the purposes of war work, and used it as an example of Westminster's neglect of Scottish interests.<sup>148</sup> The candidate chosen was Douglas Young, party chairman and a controversial anti-government figure.<sup>149</sup> During the SNP's previous incursions into by-elections there was always an acknowledgement – or in the case of Cathcart, an apology – for entering into the fray and disrupting the electoral truce. However, in Douglas Young's election address there was no such apology or even acknowledgment of the truce.<sup>150</sup> As Gordon Pentland notes, Young deliberately ignored the war and attempted to capitalise on local issues being of the primary concern in the election.<sup>151</sup> The government candidate, as always, tried to appeal to ideas of national unity and loyalty to the state, a message by this period of the war which was no longer as effective. The government candidate was Labour's Thomas Hubbard, allowing the SNP the chance to lambast Labour on its record on the issue of self-government. Despite the high hopes of the SNP and Douglas Young, an independent Christian Socialist candidate, Hendry Hilditch, intervened, splitting the anti-government vote.<sup>152</sup> Despite this potential problem, the SNP

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<sup>147</sup> NLS, Acc. 6419/44/3, minutes of meeting of the SNP National Council, 6 November 1943.

<sup>148</sup> Douglas Young, *To the Electors of Kirkcaldy Burghs* (Kirkcaldy, 1944).

<sup>149</sup> Young was tried and imprisoned for refusing military service in 1942 shortly after being elected party chairman, he was one of the most well-known faces of the SNP during this time. For more see Gordon Pentland, 'Douglas Young' in Gerry Hassan & James Mitchell (eds.) *Scottish National Party Leaders* (London 2016,) pp. 145-165.

<sup>150</sup> Douglas Young, *Election address*.

<sup>151</sup> Pentland, 'Douglas Young,' pp. 159-60.

<sup>152</sup> *The Daily Mail*, 1 November 1943.

managed to poll 6621 votes and 41% of the vote, the party's best performance yet in a by-election.<sup>153</sup> It was successful in at least staging an interruption to the truce by almost achieving its aim and scaring the Labour party with the close result of the final total. Compared to the previous efforts from 1941 to 1943, the result was an important step forward for the party.

The SNP would not have the chance to enter into the electoral fray again until the war was almost over. In April 1945 when the electoral truce was on the verge of being renounced, there was a by-election held in Motherwell due to the death of the previous MP in a car crash.<sup>154</sup> By the latter stages of the war, the government experienced a greater difficulty in encouraging voters to stand by government candidates and the electoral truce. The viewpoint of the public was generally apathetic as was the war almost over and the argument to support the government was becoming obsolete. Furthermore, the inevitability of a general election occurring in the near future meant that the result would not matter in the long term.<sup>155</sup> This was a mood which the SNP was able to capitalise on going into the Motherwell by-election. In McIntyre's campaign literature he made the following statement:

The war is not an election issue, the result of your decision on April 12 will have no effect on the war. It will have a very definite effect on the future of our country.<sup>156</sup>

The full details of the Motherwell by-election will be covered in-depth in chapter four. However, it is important to note that the SNP were able to highlight the stagnating effect the truce had caused on the operation of politics for the duration of the war. The Labour

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<sup>153</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 640.

<sup>154</sup> *Dundee Courier & Advertiser*, 6 January 1945.

<sup>155</sup> *The Scotsman*, 7 April 1945.

<sup>156</sup> Dr Robert McIntyre, *To the Electors of Motherwell and Wishaw from Dr Robert McIntyre*, (Wishaw, 1945).

candidate Alex Anderson was very much pushing a party rather than a National Government agenda, which may have both helped and hindered his cause. He admitted to the press he was proposing 'an orthodox and enlightened socialist policy.'<sup>157</sup> There was no message of support from Churchill despite his endorsement of the Liberal National/government candidate Ronald Munro in the Scottish Universities by-election held a few days after Motherwell.<sup>158</sup> The SNP was also fortunate in having a straight fight between itself and Labour, there was no other independent candidate to spilt the vote as there had been in the Kirkcaldy by-election. This time the SNP managed to triumph. The final vote was close, 11417 votes to McIntyre and 10800 to Anderson with a 54% turnout and a majority for the SNP of 617 votes.<sup>159</sup> The result caused quite an impact in the immediate aftermath in the press with coverage both nationally and internationally and was seen as a blow to the government's handling of the recent Scottish issues.

The SNP managed in the very last moments of the truce to achieve a victory over the government candidate which none of the other small parties achieved in Scotland during the course of the war. Considering the position of the party not only at the beginning of the war, but halfway through with the party split, the turnaround in its fortunes was a remarkable achievement. Obviously the operation of the truce allowed the SNP to contest with far less opposition than in peace time and the effect on turnout caused by war conditions cannot be denied. The truce however, allowed the SNP the ability to test out a new electoral strategy and gain media attention whenever it contested an election, giving the opportunity to air its

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<sup>157</sup> *The Scotsman*, 7 April 1945.

<sup>158</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 30 April 1945.

<sup>159</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 640

policy aims and propaganda to a wider audience. The final two years of the truce provided the party with enormous benefits and the achievement of one of its electoral aims.

### **The Common Wealth Party and Scotland**

A discussion on the electoral truce and the effect it had on minor parties has been confined in much of the historiography of the Second World War to the Common Wealth party.

Addison, Calder, and Thorpe all give due consideration to the party established by the circumstances of the electoral truce and ended by it in 1945.<sup>160</sup> This has mainly been due to the impact the party had in England defeating some notable government candidates in by-elections. It was far less successful in Scotland and examining the party allows the differences in the political landscapes between Scotland and the rest of Britain to be clearly mapped.

The Common Wealth party was formed in 1942 by the merging of two left wing groups, the 1941 committee and Forward March, founded by the former Liberal MP Sir Richard Acland.<sup>161</sup> The original aim of the movement was to be a leader and co-ordinator of progressive left-wing opinion, the formation of a political party was never truly the intention.<sup>162</sup> It was also an unashamedly middle-class movement which appealed to young, well-educated intellectuals and had a strong concentration of support in and around London.<sup>163</sup> This is one of several reasons why the party failed to achieve much success in Scotland. The founders of the Common Wealth party were very aware of the precarious position of the electoral truce when its party was formed, and much of its effort was expended towards breaking the truce.

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<sup>160</sup> See Addison, *The Road to 1945*, Calder, *The Common Wealth Party*, Thorpe, *Parties at War*.

<sup>161</sup> A.F Thompson, Acland, Sir Richard Thomas Dyke, fifteenth baronet, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/39848> accessed 12-01-2019.

<sup>162</sup> Calder, *Common Wealth Party*, part 1, pp. 58-59.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 46-47.

Indeed, public opinion on the truce was low after a series of military failures and some members of the public were beginning to question why they were being restricted in their ability to express political discontentment.<sup>164</sup> Calder notes that the Common Wealth party was able to capitalise on the mood of the times which was the movement away from party and more towards 'ideas'.<sup>165</sup> The publication of the Beveridge report had assisted in this rise in popularity of the politics of ideas, where parties mattered less than issues. The interpretation of the truce as causing a stagnant effect on politics was increasing amongst the left-wing press. The *New Statesman* referred to the political truce as 'having a decaying effect on the party system'.<sup>166</sup> It was this atmosphere that allowed the Common Wealth party to quickly step into the void left within the political system.

The Common Wealth party actually held one of its first meetings in Glasgow in July 1942, an interesting choice for the party given the concentration of the movements that made up the party in the south of England. The report of the meeting in the *Glasgow Herald* unfortunately gave no indication as to how well attended the meeting was, or what type of members it attracted.<sup>167</sup> One of the key messages the party conveyed at this early stage was that it was not aiming to destroy and weaken political parties, but merely highlighted its policy of common ownership and other left wing ideals. This was not extended to the Conservative party however, as the Common Wealth party believed that it had wrecked the truce by failing to keep up with the wishes of the people. It aimed to stand against Conservative candidates in by-elections, all the while offering Churchill support as the leader of the nation.<sup>168</sup> This tenuous interpretation of the truce was, as Calder analysed, a difficult policy for the party to

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid, pp. 107-8.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid pp. 75-76.

<sup>166</sup> *New Statesman*, 11 April 1942.

<sup>167</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 29 July 1942.

<sup>168</sup> Calder, *Common Wealth Party*, pp. 107-108.

maintain and it certainly did not endear it to the Scottish Unionists. The Western division of the SCUA maintained a watchful eye on Common Wealth's activities and sent members to any public meetings it held to gauge an idea of its support base. Despite the meetings being well-attended, the general impression was that the movement seemed unlikely to make any progress.<sup>169</sup>

The Unionists' opinion on the matter may have been expressed too soon as the Common Wealth party made the decision to enter a candidate in the one and only Scottish by-election it ever contested, North Midlothian. This had been as a result of a change in policy by the party in early 1943 where it was decided that the Common Wealth was to be a mass movement and that reconnaissance work needed to be undertaken to try and establish what support base existed.<sup>170</sup> The party were very aware of its southern bias and the decision to enter a Scottish by-election was a move to rectify that. The candidate adopted was Tom Wintringham, one of the movements' most senior members and was well-known as the father of the Home Guard.<sup>171</sup> He was adopted as the candidate ahead of local candidates from the East of Scotland branch because of his national renown.<sup>172</sup> His opponent was the Unionist candidate Sir David King Murray, the Solicitor General for Scotland. Murray launched his bid by attempting to place unity at the centre of his policy and claimed he would be standing as a 'national candidate, presenting a policy which ought to commend itself to every elector in the constituency regardless of political view.'<sup>173</sup> He then referred to the truce using a term

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<sup>169</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/33, minutes of meeting of the sub-committee on education and propaganda for the western division of the SCUA, 5 November 1942.

<sup>170</sup> Calder, *Common Wealth Party*, p.119.

<sup>171</sup> Adrian Smith, 'Wintringham, Thomas Henry, (1898-1949),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online* <https://doi-org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/59635> accessed 12-01-2019.

<sup>172</sup> *The Scotsman*, 22 December 1942.

<sup>173</sup> *The Scotsman*, 4 January 1943.

that had not been used since the First World War which was the 'parliamentary truce.'<sup>174</sup> It is not clear why Murray used that term, but it may have been due to the difficulties Labour had managing the parliamentary parties' response towards the truce. The throwaway manner in which Murray quotes the truce as being 'parliamentary' shows the nature of the truce by this stage of the war, that interchangeable wording was commonplace, and contributed to the overall lack of understanding of what the truce truly meant. The intimate details of the by-election campaign will be covered in detail in chapter four, however it is worth a brief reflection on the final outcome. Turnout was low at just 35%, but the result was Murray won 11620 votes to Wintringham's 10751, giving a majority of only 869.<sup>175</sup> In his victory speech, Murray declared that the result was a rebuttal of the real reasons behind the contest, an attack on the coalition and the electoral truce.<sup>176</sup> However, given the slim majority he gained, this was perhaps an over optimistic statement from Murray and showed that there was more discontentment with the government and the truce than many politicians realised.

The Common Wealth party had managed to make quite an impact in Scotland in a very short period of time, taking the largest share of the vote by any minor party standing against a government candidate at that stage of the war, an impressive 48%. This was also the best result yet for the Common Wealth party and it is intriguing that this fact has been barely acknowledged in the current literature.<sup>177</sup> Even Calder in his PhD thesis barely reflects on this fact, and quickly returns to discussing English by-elections which the party challenged. The lack of impact made in Scotland even after such a result is perhaps the reason why it is not considered more widely, given that the party actually won some by-elections south of the

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 13 February 1942.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Addison only notes the result in a graph showing swings towards the left between 1943-5 in 'By-elections in British Politics,' Thorpe does not mention it at all.

border. These are the details on which historians have reflected leaving the Midlothian result to become a mere footnote in the party history.

The Midlothian election became an anomaly for the Common Wealth party as it never challenged a Scottish by-election again and did not seem to expend much effort in growing the party within Scotland. Calder mentions that in the Autumn of 1943 election schools were held by the party across the country and two of those were held in Aberdeen and Perth.<sup>178</sup> In the expansive second part of his thesis, Calder discusses the organisation of the party and notes several reasons why the party did not do well in Scotland. One of the main issues was the difficulty of travelling during the war; Scotland was difficult for party leaders to travel to in order to speak.<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, it is worth considering that many of the potential recruits that could have established Common Wealth organisations in Scotland were often already commandeered by the SNP and occasionally the Communists. Given that the party was very middle class in nature and membership, it lacked the ability to recruit able organisers and members from a fairly small pool of people within Scotland. The SNP even had a discussion and vote on whether it should form an electoral pact with the Common Wealth party, as it was amenable to devolution and the SNP thought it may be a way to break the established parties. However, the party had a strict policy of not fraternising with any political party who had headquarters outside of Scotland and the motion was defeated.<sup>180</sup> The fact that the SNP even briefly considered making a pact with the party suggests that its influence, while small, offered potential for a fellow minor party to capitalise on.

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<sup>178</sup> Calder, *Common Wealth*, p. 181.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid*, part 2, pp. 84-5.

<sup>180</sup> NLS. Acc.6419/44/4, minutes of SNP National Council, 12 August 1944.

The Common Wealth party certainly made an impact on the truce nationally in Britain given that it was born from the electoral truce but then terminated by the electoral truce.<sup>181</sup> It was unable to truly claim to be a party fighting for the electoral freedom of the country given it aligned itself quickly with Labour and wished for affiliation. However, in terms of Scotland, the movement failed to capture the Scottish public's imagination. As mentioned earlier, the left of the political spectrum was already claimed by three small and more established parties in Scotland. The distance from the party's central base in London made it difficult to grow the party effectively. Plus, it lacked the resources and financial support so crucial to the success of establishing a new political party. The general apathy of the Scottish press to the party also halted its growth as it was seen as an English middle-class movement which was not interested in Scotland or her political distinctiveness.

### **Conclusion - The Electoral Truce and Wartime Politics**

The electoral truce had an immense effect on the political landscape of both Britain and Scotland over the course of the war. These two chapters have offered a close examination of the truce and given the remarkable insights into wartime politics that have emerged, it is surprising that more consideration had not been accorded to the subject in the current historiography. What has been shown in these chapters are three important points: first, that thoroughly scrutinising the three different descriptions of the truce, 'electoral', 'political' and 'party,' gave new insights into how the political parties in Scotland interpreted the truce; secondly, that the truce has been side-lined in the current literature to such an extent that it has been unclear until now how much its existence affected the operation of political organisations in Scotland; and thirdly, that the Scottish branches of the coalition

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<sup>181</sup> Calder, *Common Wealth Party*, part 2, p. 186.

parties showed strong resistance to the truce interfering with the operation of their organisations. Despite appeals to their central party organisations, they were consistently ignored. These three inter-related issues have shown that there were some key differences in the political landscape between Scotland and the rest of Britain. The Scottish branches of the coalition parties were determined to question the truce, to understand how much political activity they could engage in and ultimately saved their organisations from entirely disappearing. While Thorpe has examined similar issues in his work, he only considered the Scottish branches sporadically. These two chapters have attempted to reconstruct a narrative about both the truce and party-political engagement across Scotland.

The inter-changeable wording of the truce, has barely been considered by other historians and this is a subject which, as these chapters have highlighted, had a massive impact on how political parties behaved. The lack of clarity regarding expected political behaviour because of the truce was one of the issues which prevented political engagement in parties across Scotland for the duration of the war. As the war progressed, the idea of the truce and national unity became intertwined, due to the way the main parties interpreted the truce beyond the original terms. The result was an environment which discouraged challenges to the truce and became a 'mood,' an atmosphere of consensus. This was encouraged by the Scottish media which harangued minor parties who were not signatories to the truce for entering the electoral fray in any by-election contests. The truce for minor parties, as mentioned earlier, was both a blessing and a curse. It made it easier for them to contest because of the lack of competition, but, also more difficult as they had to face a barrage of criticism from the government and the media of being unpatriotic disturbers of unity.

For such a short and simple document, the details of the electoral truce were debated, questioned and considered by all political parties from the day the document was signed until the day it was terminated. The misunderstanding caused by a general lack of awareness of the terms of the truce led to years of confused and poor decision making by the coalition parties. This was further compounded by the assigning of several names to the document, each of which indicated a different meaning to what was actually agreed. It dictated political engagement for six years and shaped and formulated the way political parties operated. For the Scottish branches of all the parties, they had no real say in the terms of the truce and were forced to work within the guidelines – both specified and implicit – regardless of the effect it might have had on their organisations.

**Chapter Three – Pacifists, Patriots and Partisans: Themes in Scottish Parliamentary By-Elections, 1939-1940.**

By-elections in Scotland during the Second World War currently receive little more than a passing mention in the historiography. Historians have largely concentrated on important English by-elections which saw the Conservative-dominated coalition defeated by independents or members of the newly formed Common Wealth party. Paul Addison and Andrew Thorpe mention Scottish by-elections occasionally in their work, often discussing them in conjunction with broader UK results.<sup>1</sup> The most commonly mentioned Scottish by-election is the Motherwell by-election of April 1945, which saw the SNP achieve victory against a Labour candidate.<sup>2</sup> This contest is often mentioned not only due to the defeat of the Labour candidate at the hands of the SNP, but because it was the first occasion since the outbreak of war that took place on the updated electoral register.<sup>3</sup> This was just a month before the end of the war in Europe, and the fact that such a result occurred raises numerous questions about the nature of electoral politics in Scotland throughout the duration of the war.

Previous chapters examined the electoral truce, which established the political environment for the duration of the war and the problems it posed to party operation. These next two chapters consider several interlinking issues which should allow for a clearer picture of the political landscape in Scotland. First, they will utilise by-elections to consider how the electoral system operated when restrictions were placed on normal party politics. The chapters will discuss the resentment this caused and how it brought challenges from

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<sup>1</sup> Addison, 'By-Elections of the Second World War,' pp. 130-141. Thorpe, *Parties at War*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 131 & p. 147, *Ibid*, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*. pp. 131-2.

those not included in the new system such as minor parties and individuals. Secondly, it is important to consider the issues which these parties raised in order to challenge the political status quo, such as pacifism, highlighting the government neglect of specifically Scottish issues, such as a lack of wartime industry located in Scotland, or a lack of democratic choice. This will allow an insight into the political issues that appealed to the electorate as by-elections became one of the few outlets through which to express political opinion. By-elections were also one of the limited ways to contest the legitimacy of an otherwise unchallengeable government. There were of course still limits on the extent to which public opinion could find an outlet, this was entirely dependent on the policies put forward by the political parties contesting. Nevertheless, the number of contested by-elections in Scotland suggested this outlet was certainly utilised by minor parties.

In the historiography it has been taken for granted that political patterns across the UK were similar. Yet, for all political parties, their Scottish branches were larger and more autonomous in terms of decision making than branches in other regional areas across Britain. Despite this, there is little in the current literature about the operation of Scottish political parties in this period, and there are only sporadic attempts to examine electoral politics during the war, most of which explore individual parties or take a very broad overview.<sup>4</sup> There is a body of information which is missing from our current understanding of Scotland's political engagement for the duration of the war. The following two chapters aim to plug that historiographical gap, allowing the events of 1945 and afterwards to be set in their proper context.

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<sup>4</sup> The larger studies of wartime British politics such as Thorpe, *Parties at War* and Addison, *The Road to 1945*, consider Scotland only sporadically. See references on p. 11 for the full list of works which explore Scotland and Scottish politics in this era.

The by-elections examined in these chapter all have unique characteristics which are important in a British as well as a Scottish context. For example, the constituency of Clackmannan and Stirling Burghs in October 1939 was the first contested by-election of the war. The contest in Argyll in April 1940 saw not only the first SNP incursion into a wartime by-election, but the legitimacy of the electoral truce being placed at the centre of a by-election campaign. The first official break in the electoral truce came just weeks later from the Scottish constituency of Glasgow Pollok in April 1940, where the local Labour party were disaffiliated for defying the NEC. The final by-election examined in this chapter held in East Renfrewshire was the last outright anti-war campaign fought in Scotland and saw the highest number of votes cast for a pacifist candidate anywhere in the entire UK.

### **The Addison Model**

The only real scholarly attempt to study by-elections across the whole of Britain during the Second World War was carried out by Paul Addison. He proposed a model which considers that there were three distinct stages in the development of the by-election challenges faced by three main parties.<sup>5</sup> By-elections held between 1939 and the summer of 1941 saw a spate of anti-war and pacifist candidates who were more often than not independents, Communists or members of the ILP. It was a period where the challenges were met with little enthusiasm, often resulting in candidates losing their deposits. The period from late 1941 to 1942, Addison argued, was the era which placed challenging the electoral truce at the centre of campaigns. This interpretation comes mainly from the fact that the Common Wealth party was formed with that very purpose in mind. It sought to ensure that the truce

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<sup>5</sup> The following model is compiled from Paul Addison, 'By-Elections of the Second World War,' pp. 130-1. It is a condensed version of his two-page outline of the way by-elections played out over the course of the war.

was either broken or pressure was placed on the Conservatives to make some reforms to the government. This was a period where challenges to the government were most prominent across the UK and where government candidates began to be defeated. In the final years of the war from 1943 to 1945, Addison notes warm public reaction to the so-called Beveridge Report. It was this public enthusiasm which pushed by-election candidates to run on a progressive socialist agenda.<sup>6</sup> The Conservatives struggled to hold seats against the increased popularity of the progressive Common Wealth party, indicating that a post-war general election may not be as straightforward as Churchill hoped.

Addison, of course, focused on the United Kingdom as a whole. Consequently, his analysis of the 141 by-elections held across the UK for the duration of the war led him to produce this convincing model. However, as Christopher Harvie noted in his study of the Labour party during the Second World War, Scotland actually saw a disproportionately contested number of by-elections.<sup>7</sup> The UK-wide figure for contesting by-elections was, as mentioned, 141. Overall, 75 seats were contested in by-elections, the other 66 were filled unopposed. However, in Scotland alone there were fifteen by-elections during the war, twelve were contested, leaving only three unopposed.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, at least two of those uncontested elections were considered for contention by the SNP, the ILP and the Communists. If these parties had followed through on their intentions, it would have left only one uncontested. These figures certainly align with Harvie's contention that Scotland experienced a higher degree of political volatility.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland', pp. 933-4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

As outlined above, a selection of the most pertinent by-elections will be discussed within these chapters. The by-elections have been selected as they are the examples which either conform to or diverge quite significantly from Addison's model. Out of the twelve contested by-elections during the war, nine of those will be examined across the two chapters. Three of the contested elections have been excluded from analysis, one of those was the Combined Scottish Universities seat from April 1945. As the electorate for this seat was so selective and university seat results are calculated using a different mechanism, it was not a very useful case study example. The other two contested by-elections of Hamilton and Edinburgh Central were omitted as case studies. Edinburgh was excluded due to the ILP contestant entering a week before polling, plus the campaign had such a low turnout it was not useful for any form of analysis. Hamilton was excluded again because of low turnout, and due to the campaign being very focused on issues within the constituency. It barely drew any press attention, thus there was little useful analysis that could be drawn from events to effectively consider where it fitted with the Addison Model. The nine contests which were selected vary in location but are generally in the more populated areas of the country such as the west and east coasts, Glasgow and central belt areas. The peacetime electorate who were eligible to vote across these nine constituencies numbered around half a million people and was probably representative of around a quarter of the Scottish electorate.<sup>9</sup> Obviously wartime conditions meant that this figure was greatly altered, however, these nine by-elections in total represent the votes of over 200,000 people, roughly between 10 to 15 per cent of the total electorate.<sup>10</sup> These allow us a glimpse into some of the issues and concerns under discussion at by-elections and the response of the

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<sup>9</sup> Figures calculated from Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, the total number of votes cast for all candidates in the nine by-elections was 203,565.

electorate to these issues.

The chapters will employ Addison's model as a starting point but will contend that Scottish by-election patterns do not conform to the model he proposed. The anti-truce section in particular will argue that candidates in Scottish by-elections highlighted the electoral truce as an issue far earlier than Addison's model. The anti-war section will highlight that the period where candidates entered elections on that policy was far more short-lived than the rest of the UK where anti-war candidates still entered by-elections until 1941.<sup>11</sup>

For ease of understanding the table below outlines the by-elections which will be covered in this chapter.

**Figure 1**

<b>By-Election</b>	<b>Date of Election</b>	<b>Candidates</b>
Argyll	10 April 1940	Duncan McCallum (Unionist) William Power (SNP)
Clackmannan & East Stirlingshire	13 October 1939	Andrew Stewart (Pacifist) Arthur Woodburn (Labour)
East Renfrewshire	9 May 1940	Major G Lloyd (Unionist) Annie Maxton (ILP)
Glasgow Pollok	30 April 1940	Commander Thomas Galbraith (Unionist) John Nicolson (Independent Labour)
<b>Uncontested</b>		
Montrose Burghs	5 July 1940	John Maclay (Liberal National)

### **Picking a Battle Over Peace**

The inter-war period saw challenges to the two-party system with the Liberals pushed aside by the growing Labour movement. There was the emergence of minor fringe political parties

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<sup>11</sup> As noted by Addison, p. 130-1.

such as the Communists and the British Union of Fascists as well as the birth of Nationalist movements in Scotland and Wales.<sup>12</sup> The fallout from the creation of the National Government in 1931 saw political parties splinter into those that supported it such as the 'National Labour' and 'Liberal Nationals' factions, with the remainder of the Labour party becoming the opposition. These events threw party politics into confusion and placed pressure on the bonds within political parties. In Scotland, politics was no less settled, Malcolm Petrie has noted that Scotland saw an explosion of radical politics in the inter-war period, led by the Communists, the ILP and Labour.<sup>13</sup> There were also disagreements within the Unionist party over the policy of appeasement, culminating in the 1938 Kinross and Perth by-election, where the sitting MP resigned over government policy and attempted re-election as an independent.<sup>14</sup> During the period 1931-39 in Scotland, there were sixteen by-elections sixteen held in Scotland over an eight year period. Yet during the six years of the war, fifteen by-elections were held, twelve of which were contested. Naturally by-elections occur during a war as members are called to the forces, or the usual instances of old age and retirement occur. But given the calling of the electoral truce, there would have been an expectation of the number of contested by-elections significantly decreasing. When comparing to the four years of the First World War when a similar electoral truce was called, there were eleven by-elections with only three contested.<sup>15</sup> This was undeniably an indication of the trend in political volatility during the Second World War.

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<sup>12</sup> Calder, p. 67

<sup>13</sup> Petrie, *Popular Politics*, p. 156.

<sup>14</sup> Stuart Ball, 'The Politics of Appeasement: The Fall of the Duchess of Atholl and the Kinross and West Perth By-election, December 1938,' *The Scottish Historical Review*, 69, 187 (1990), pp. 49-83.

<sup>15</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*.

In the first month after the declaration of war, only two by-elections had occurred both of which were uncontested and held in English constituencies.<sup>16</sup> The first Scottish by-election was held in the district of Clackmannan and Stirling Burghs on 13 October 1939, due to the death of the previous Labour MP.<sup>17</sup> This was also the first contested by-election in the whole of Britain, just over a month after the electoral truce had been agreed between the three main parties. Under the terms of the truce, the Labour party faced no contest from the Unionists or Liberals and began the preparations for filling the vacancy. The chosen candidate was Arthur Woodburn, the Scottish Secretary of the Labour Party. This came as a surprise to some. Woodburn had officially relinquished the right to stand as a candidate by taking up the post of Secretary.<sup>18</sup> As one of his main roles in that position was to select the candidates, the decision to stand himself shocked both the SEC and the NEC.<sup>19</sup> However, Woodburn had been encouraged by his friends in the Commons and the chairman of the constituency party to stand, as they believed he was a more valuable asset to the party than his position of Secretary allowed.<sup>20</sup> The NEC elections sub-committee soon informed Woodburn that by standing as a candidate he had automatically broken the terms of his contract of employment.<sup>21</sup> Woodburn was reluctant to concede that it would not be possible to do both jobs – only doing so once his nomination was secured.

With the outbreak of war and the agreement of the electoral truce, it initially appeared that Woodburn would have an uncontested return. This remained the case until the end of

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<sup>16</sup> Fareham on 6 October 1939 and High Peak on 7 October 1939. Taken from Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results*.

<sup>17</sup> *The Scotsman*, 23 August 1939.

<sup>18</sup> Pentland (ed.) *The Autobiography of Arthur Woodburn*, p. 92.

<sup>19</sup> LPA, NEC Files, elections sub-committee meeting, 30 August 1939.

<sup>20</sup> Pentland, *Arthur Woodburn*, p. 92

<sup>21</sup> NLS Acc.7656, Box 13/4, letter from George Shepherd to Arthur Woodburn, 30 August 1939.

September with the polling day set for 5 October.<sup>22</sup> However on 1 October, a meeting of pacifist and left-wing groups was held in the SSP premises in Glasgow. This resolved to put forward a Stop-the-War candidate.<sup>23</sup> The chosen candidate was Andrew Stewart, assistant editor of the *Peace News*.<sup>24</sup> He was backed by a complicated cabal which included support from the ILP, The SSP, The No-Conscription league and the Peace Pledge Union.<sup>25</sup> The hasty decision to contest very close to the nomination day did not suggest the encouragement to stand came from within the constituency. Rather, it was a calculated decision to stand against Woodburn specifically, given he was a known Conscientious Objector from the First World War.<sup>26</sup> As Ewen Cameron has noted, Scotland experienced its fair share of anti-war sentiment during the First World War and there was the potential for this sentiment to emerge again.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, during the latter half of the 1930s the ILP and Communist parties – both of which boasted stronger support bases in Scotland – were supportive of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War and anti-appeasement from a pacifist perspective.<sup>28</sup> Therefore the potential for anti-war or pacifist tendencies to develop in certain Scottish constituencies under the right circumstances was a real possibility. In this context, the decision to place an anti-war candidate in Clackmannan made sense. It would allow the Scottish section of the Stop-The-War movement to gauge potential levels of wider popular support.

The fact that Clackmannan was the first contested election attracted the media's attention, especially because the opposition to the Labour party was a pacifist candidate. Indeed, the

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<sup>22</sup> *The Scotsman*, 2 October 1939.

<sup>23</sup> *The Scotsman*, 1 October 1939.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Woodburn, p. 93, and *The Scotsman*, 1 October 1939.

<sup>26</sup> Woodburn, pp. 20-1.

<sup>27</sup> Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, p. 179.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180-1.

*Scotsman* remarked that there was widespread surprise at Stewart's entry into the election; it had been assumed that Woodburn would be returned unopposed.<sup>29</sup>

Soon after his candidacy was announced Stewart gave a statement to the press regarding his reasons for entering the contest:

The only political issue at present was war or peace. That issue cut through all familiar party barriers...this was shown by the fact that the three political parties had agreed to an electoral truce for the duration of the war and instead of being a Socialist candidate Mr Woodburn was a war coalition candidate.<sup>30</sup>

Stewart's statement of intent was designed to delegitimise the truce as a necessity and he obviously hoped to convert reluctant supporters of the war to the pacifist cause. His strategy was an important piece of propaganda as the media announced his intervention into the election as a 'break' in the truce. If not announced in the by-lines, the press would preface the story with 'despite the political truce,' and 'notwithstanding the wartime political truce.'<sup>31</sup> This reinforces the point raised in the previous chapter regarding the media's use of the national-unity narrative as a pervading expectation of political behaviour. Stewart's entry into the election necessitated polling day being changed to 13 October to allow for additional campaigning time, and his backers moved fast. They already had three organisers ready to travel to Clackmannan the day after his announcement in order to begin the campaign efforts.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *The Scotsman*, 13 October 1939.

<sup>30</sup> *The Scotsman*, 1 October 1939.

<sup>31</sup> *Daily Herald*, 2 October 1939 and *The Times*, 2 October 1939.

<sup>32</sup> *The Scotsman*, 2 October 1939.

The immediate issue for Woodburn and Labour was to attempt to neutralise the threat posed by the pacifist candidate in potentially converting Labour voters to his cause.

Woodburn opened his campaign meetings by stating that in agreeing with his opponent, the electors were not voting for a true peace, but would in fact be prolonging the war as surrender to Hitler was futile.<sup>33</sup> When public meetings were advertised in the press, Woodburn's tagline was 'Vote for Woodburn, the Real Peace Candidate.'<sup>34</sup> His election literature continued this message emphasising that to vote for Woodburn would send a real 'Stop-the-War-message to Hitler'.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, it alluded to Woodburn's past declaring he had always been a fighter for peace, as has the Labour party. It was notable that the leaflet contained only a brief mention that an electoral truce had been called between the main political parties.<sup>36</sup>

Stewart tried to oppose this strategy by outlining in an article in *Forward* that Woodburn was in fact 'not a Labour candidate, but a war coalition candidate.'<sup>37</sup> This was obviously a method to draw Labour party supporters to his cause by reminding them that Labour had agreed to a truce with the other two parties.<sup>38</sup> He pointed out that the issues at stake in the election were very different from a 'narrow party-political contest,' pronouncing his disapproval of the government declaring war without consulting public opinion.<sup>39</sup> He then equated the by-election as an opportunity for the public to voice that opinion.<sup>40</sup> In the same issue of *Forward*, the paper's editor Emrys Hughes expressed the opinion that Andrew

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<sup>33</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 3 October 1939.

<sup>34</sup> *The Falkirk Herald*, 11 October 1939

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> NLS Acc.7656, Box 13/1, Arthur Woodburn election address for Clackmannan and East Stirlingshire By-election, 13 October 1939.

<sup>37</sup> *Forward*, 7 October 1939.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

Stewart had made a fatal error in contesting Clackmannan against Woodburn, as the Labour party faithful would fight for Woodburn regardless of the opposition. Essentially, his intrusion achieved the opposite of his aim and did not enable the strongly pro-Labour constituency to effectively register any opposition to the war.<sup>41</sup> Evidently with *Forward* offering tacit support to the pacifist candidate, the election was causing some ruptures amongst socialist supporters in Scotland over which candidate was truly the voice of the movement. Woodburn was especially disgusted as he was a regular contributor to the paper and found it difficult to understand why they were reluctant to back him.<sup>42</sup>

Another tactic Woodburn employed to usurp Stewart's message on peace and take control of the campaign narrative was announcing a policy named 'Labour Means Peace,' a week before the election. It was a four-plank policy whereby conflict would be solved by submitting disputes for international arbitration and emphasised that mutual consent was required for a true peace.<sup>43</sup> In his election appeal which was featured in *Forward*, Woodburn asked members of the Labour movement to quell their natural instinct for peace or supporting his opposing candidate, as the nature of this war made it impossible to be neutral.<sup>44</sup> Thomas Johnston, the Labour MP in the neighbouring constituency of Clackmannan and West Stirling, publicly backed Woodburn, as did party leader Clement Attlee sending a message of support on the eve of the election.<sup>45</sup> Attlee's statement was mostly an opportunity to reiterate Labour's war policy, as only the opening paragraph mentioned Woodburn. Attlee also reminded any pacifist leaning Labour voters that 'peace is the desire of everyone in this country, but peace means something more than the cessation

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Acc.7656, Box 13/4, letter from Woodburn to Gordon Stott.

<sup>43</sup> *Daily Herald*, 7 October 1939.

<sup>44</sup> *Forward*, 7 October 1939.

<sup>45</sup> *The Scotsman*, 9 October 1939.

of hostilities.<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, the Labour party found to its chagrin that the pacifist message was appealing to some supporters. Several members of the Clackmannan constituency party publicly endorsed the opposition candidate. A bigger concern was the pacifist tendency shown by Labour's prospective candidate in South Lanark, Jack Gibson, who acted as the election agent for Stewart. After the election both the SEC and NEC were shocked to learn of Gibson's role and seven other Labour party members who assisted in the campaign. The NEC and SEC deeply disapproved and the members in question received written warnings about their conduct, threatening them with disciplinary action if they repeated the action in future.<sup>47</sup>

At one of the final meetings of the campaign, the ILP MP James Maxton – who was speaking on behalf of Stewart – commented:

Every member of parliament from the Prime Minister down would be watching the result of this election with the closest scrutiny to determine the minds of the electors in a typical mining constituency.<sup>48</sup>

This statement may have been overreaching, but there was no doubt that the government would observe with interest the result of the first contested by-election of the war. The election also allowed the opportunity to assess the level of support the peace campaign had within a section of the electorate who may have been persuaded by their message.

When polling day arrived on 13<sup>th</sup> October, *The Scotsman* featured an analysis of the campaign, remarking that normal campaign politics had been absent from both sides as the discussion had centred on whether to accept Hitler's offer of peace or to continue to fight

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> LPA, NEC Files, organisation sub-committee meeting, 18 October 1939.

<sup>48</sup> *The Scotsman*, 12 October 1939.

the war. The paper noted that although wartime conditions had made the ability to campaign difficult, both candidates had succeeded in 'stimulating an unusual amount of genuine and whole-hearted interest in the issues at stake.'<sup>49</sup> This was the first indication that the electoral politics and by-election campaigning would take on a different flavour in Scotland during the war and would encompass many issues which would not normally be discussed in a by-election such as unity and national identity. Despite the extensive campaigning of the Stop-the-War candidate, there was never serious concern in Woodburn's camp that they would lose. They were right to be confident of victory; Woodburn attracted 15645 votes to Stewart's 1060. The turnout was exceptionally low, at only 28 per cent.<sup>50</sup> Woodburn noted in his autobiography that he suspected Unionists did not bother to vote.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless the margin of victory was large for Labour and for Woodburn personally, with the pacifist candidate polling a mere 6.5 per cent of the vote and losing his deposit. Stewart was notably disappointed by the result, attacking the Clackmannan electorate as being, 'quite mad in voting for a continuation of the war.'<sup>52</sup> The aftermath of the campaign left Labour facing an organisational nightmare, as several members of Scottish CLPs had assisted Stewart's campaign against the party's official candidate. Some notable supporters had included the general secretary of the SSP, the vice-chair of the Glasgow council Labour group and a prospective candidate.<sup>53</sup> As Christopher Harvie has noted, Scottish Labour still had not recovered from the party spilt in 1932.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *The Scotsman*, 13 October 1939.

<sup>50</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 647.

<sup>51</sup> Woodburn, p. 93.

<sup>52</sup> *The Scotsman*, 16 October 1939.

<sup>53</sup> *The Daily Herald*, 25 October 1939 and *Glasgow Herald*, 24 October 1939.

<sup>54</sup> Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland', p. 925.

Labour were fortunate that its opponent did not effectively capture the public imagination at least allowing them to claim a strong victory.

A few days after Clackmannan, an editorial appeared in the *Daily Herald* discussing the significance of Labour's win. Despite the constituency being located in an area where pacifism was probably stronger than anywhere else in the British Isles, they observed the Stop- the-War candidate had barely made any impact.<sup>55</sup> There were several reasons for the failure of his campaign, beginning with the rather late entry into the by-election. It conveyed the impression that it was an opportunistic decision with little consideration of the potential result. The cabal supporting Stewart made a grave error in contesting that particular election against a Labour candidate and prominent Scottish politician. If they had waited to enter an election against a Unionist, they may have achieved greater success. Stewart had a distinct lack of electioneering experience, which was compensated for by endorsement from more practiced political campaigners. He faced difficulties in outlining a convincing reason to vote for his cause, attempting to equate the by-election with a public vote on continuing the war. The fact that the public did not support this endeavour suggested opposition to the pacifist cause; even more remarkable in such a favourable constituency. This was a common occurrence. As Addison noted, there was very little politically motivated anti-war sentiment expressed in Britain through the first year of the war.<sup>56</sup> Although the government carefully observed any pacifist challenges, parties other than the ILP failed to experience any modicum of success.<sup>57</sup> The Communists and British Union of Fascists struggled to save their deposits, while independent candidates often achieved better success due to their local

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<sup>55</sup> *Daily Herald*, 16 October 1939.

<sup>56</sup> Addison, 'By-Elections,' p. 135.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. 134.

connections. Between Clackmannan in October 1939, and the next anti-war by-election candidature at East Renfrew in May 1940, ten contested by-elections were held across the UK. Out of those ten elections, seven featured candidates with an anti-war campaign.<sup>58</sup> The most successful had been the independent anti-war candidate in the Kettering by-election of March 1940, with the candidate gaining 6616 votes and a 27 per cent share of the vote against his Conservative opponent.<sup>59</sup> The most notable party challenge was from the ILP at Stretford in December 1939 winning 15 per cent of the vote against a Conservative candidate.<sup>60</sup> Overall, these figures highlight that the pacifist message did not appear to resonate with voters at by-elections.

### **The March of Miss Maxton**

After playing a supporting role in the Clackmannan campaign, the ILP decided to enter an election in its own right, during the government's peak moment of crisis between April and May 1940. The election in question was held in the county of East Renfrewshire on 9 May 1940, the largest single member constituency in Scotland. The vacancy was caused when the sitting Unionist MP, the Marquis of Clydesdale, needed to relinquish his seat in the House of Commons upon the death of his father the Duke of Hamilton, and move up to the House of Lords.<sup>61</sup> Since 1918 the area had been politically contentious with three by-elections and six general elections being fought with close results between the Unionists and Labour. However, during the 1930s and likely due to the existence of a National Government, Unionists had won larger majorities with the 1935 election yielding a majority

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<sup>58</sup> See Appendix A compiled from Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections* for more details.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Selkirk of Douglas, 'Hamilton, Douglas Douglas- (1903-1973) fourteenth duke of Hamilton and eleventh duke of Brandon,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online* <https://doiorg.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/58670> (accessed 13-08-2019).

of over 13000.<sup>62</sup> The constituency consisted of a variety of different localities from small prosperous villages to poorer industrial hubs – it was by no means homogenous in a social or political sense.<sup>63</sup>

The unsettled nature of the constituency and the proximity to the working class, industrial vote, caused the ILP to make a bid for the constituency as it believed there was a large body of opinion in the country against the continuation of the war.<sup>64</sup>

The party had surprisingly remained out of the spotlight since the outbreak of war, only supporting Stop-The-War independent candidates from the side-lines and occasionally speaking at a campaign event. There had not been an outright ILP candidate in a Scottish by-election contest since Kilmarnock in November 1933.<sup>65</sup> With the party's three MPs all coming from Scottish constituencies, it was only a matter of time before it finally decided to contest an election. It needed to ensure members retained an interest in party politics as the Stop-The-War and pacifist activities would only retain members to a certain extent. From the outset, the East Renfrewshire by-election was a more professional affair with the opposition candidate being from a political party, unlike Clackmannan where Andrew Stewart represented a collection of movements and had some political party backing. This meant the ILP candidate could command a following from members of the Labour movement who would be unwilling to vote for a Unionist. The party was fortunate in the choice of candidate, Annie Maxton, the sister of ILP MP James Maxton.<sup>66</sup> Although it was her first ever parliamentary campaign, she had at least experienced some form of frontline

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Mass Observation Archive Online (MO), File report 111, B2, Report on the East Renfrew by-election, 16 May 1940, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Forward*, 20 April 1940.

<sup>65</sup> This conclusion was reached from examining Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*.

<sup>66</sup> *The Scotsman*, 25 March 1940.

politics as a former town councillor, she was also a local resident having been born in Barrhead.<sup>67</sup> This was a direct contrast with the pacifist candidate in Clackmannan who was a journalist not a politician, and had no local connection to the region. These factors were important in a wartime by-election as candidates needed more than just a strong message. Candidates needed to display a connection with the constituency as a way to encourage voters to disobey the government's message to vote for candidates of the three main parties.<sup>68</sup>

The ILP would be the only minor party to contest against the Unionists' government candidate. The SNP quickly indicated that it would not enter the contest due to its desire to concentrate completely on the Argyll by-election, which was in full campaign mode at that point. John MacCormick released a statement declaring that 'if we fought East Renfrewshire – a good constituency from our point of view – it would mean weakening our effort in Argyll.'<sup>69</sup> Clearly fighting two campaigns simultaneously would have had potentially dangerous consequences for the SNP, given the precarious financial and organisational difficulties it was experiencing.<sup>70</sup>

The Unionist candidate, Major Guy Lloyd, had been granted special leave from his role within the BEF in France to contest the election, and was openly hostile to the ILP challenge. He gave a rousing victory speech in the GUA headquarters after his unanimous victory to express his distaste:

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<sup>67</sup> *Forward*, 20 April 1940.

<sup>68</sup> Addison, 'By-Elections', p. 136.

<sup>69</sup> *The Scotsman*, 28 March 1940.

<sup>70</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 217.

I am by nature a fighter and I am a happy warrior to be going forward in this contest to win. But to win is not enough we must thrash out the ILP who have dared to cross the bridges of the Clyde into the sacred precincts of East Renfrewshire carrying the flag of truce and surrender to Hitler.<sup>71</sup>

The leading tactic in the Unionist campaign was to capitalise on patriot fervour and assert Lloyd's authority on the war – given his military credentials – in order to delegitimise any of Maxton's statements about the war. He appeared on his election literature dressed in his military uniform, and most likely wore it at campaign meetings to once again reinforce his message. As Ewen Cameron has noted, the Unionist party tended to wrap itself in the flag of national unity and allow the status of military personnel candidates to carry it to victory.<sup>72</sup>

Both candidates launched their campaigns on 23 April giving them almost three weeks to put their policies before the electorate who would make their decision on 9 May. Major Lloyd began his campaign in Barrhead – Annie Maxton's hometown – and drew on his own credentials as a veteran of the Great War. He stated that he hated war but that it was necessary to fight and not surrender.<sup>73</sup> Maxton made her opening statement about the problems faced by the working classes if the war continued. It was a safe start for both candidates drawing on class and patriotism as obvious messages for their target audiences. As with the pacifist opponent in the Clackmannan by-election, the Scottish mainstream press gave Maxton's campaign opening statement very limited coverage, with most of the details focused on Major Lloyd's message about national unity. Indeed, *The Scotsman* on nomination day quoted heavily from a speech given by Major Lloyd which picked apart

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<sup>71</sup> *The Scotsman*, 17 April 1940.

<sup>72</sup> Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, p. 192.

<sup>73</sup> *The Scotsman*, 24 April 1940.

Maxton's statements and observed that in none of her speeches had she offered any thanks to those fighting and giving their lives in the war. He claimed that pacifism was 'undermining morale on the home front and stabbing our men in the back.'<sup>74</sup> All of the campaign coverage was designed to give as much exposure as possible to the government candidate and very few details of the ILP's campaign.

One place which did contain coverage of the ILP's campaign was the newspaper *Forward*, awarding her a full page spread of her opening campaign address. Maxton focused on several previous by-elections including Clackmannan, Argyll and the ILP candidate's success at polling 3000 votes in Stretford. This, she claimed, was as a result of the British public expressing their opinion on the war through the ballot box as it was currently the only method the public had to exercise their democratic opinion.<sup>75</sup> This was an interesting perspective offered by Maxton as, due to a variety of wartime restrictions, the public's ability to register any discontent with the government was limited to very narrow parameters. Minor parties were indeed constrained to this type of fringe campaigning and clutching at any possible help to their cause.

A campaign meeting of Maxton's which was allotted coverage in the media saw her brother James speak on her behalf. The *Scotsman* reported that around 300 people crammed into Giffnock village hall to hear James Maxton declare that the electoral truce was stifling democracy and that its continuation was wrong.<sup>76</sup> He claimed the ILP would always wish to be 'the voice of democracy'. It was interesting that Maxton decided to highlight the truce rather than the peace aspect of the campaign. It is possible that he realised the anti-

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<sup>74</sup> *The Scotsman*, 30 April 1940.

<sup>75</sup> *Forward*, 20 April 1940.

<sup>76</sup> *The Scotsman*, 3 May 1940.

democratic argument was an important aspect to publicise in the crucial days of May 1940; when the message of peace seemed churlish in the face of German invasion forces spreading through Europe. However, a report written by Mass Observation shortly after the by-election noted that the large turnouts at those particular meetings may have been a result of curiosity to hear James Maxton speak, as he was a prominent figure in and around Glasgow.<sup>77</sup> One notable outcome of this meeting was a statement made to *The Scotsman* by a local ILP councillor. She indicated the party did not expect to win the by-election, but hoped it would win enough votes to cause the government to realise the strength of the peace movement in Scotland.<sup>78</sup> It was quite indiscreet for a member of the party to reveal such details with a week left in the campaign. It may have allowed the Unionist candidate to argue there was no point in entering a contest that you did not hope nor expect to win.

Both candidates had the opportunity to expand upon their viewpoints in their election literature. Major Lloyd's literature was light on policy details, but heavily emphasised the war and the need for unity above all other considerations. There was a brief mention of the need to ensure people had security and better living standards, however, Lloyd essentially stated that would be an issue to be addressed after the war. The details of an ordinary by-election campaign were not highlighted as a primary concern by Lloyd, his focus was almost entirely on the war.<sup>79</sup> He used military sentiments throughout his leaflet by commanding voters to go 'to your stations,' as an attempt to reinforce his leadership credentials.<sup>80</sup>

Maxton's election literature was far more wide-ranging than Lloyd's, not only did it outline her anti-war policy, it contained a section on war-time difficulties and social justice aims

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<sup>77</sup> MO Report on East Renfrew By-election, p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> *The Scotsman*, 3 May 1940.

<sup>79</sup> Major Guy Lloyd, *To the Electors of East Renfrewshire*, (Glasgow, 1940).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

which she demanded should be implemented immediately.<sup>81</sup> Maxton concentrated her address towards Labour voters planning to reluctantly support Lloyd, encouraging them to change their vote and stay within the Labour movement. Both candidates, in terms of their campaign techniques and sentiments, were targeting their traditional sections of the electorate. Lloyd ensured he made a wide-ranging appeal to all adherents of the electoral truce, rooting his campaign in his own suitability as a serving soldier and loyal government candidate. Maxton, in contrast, strongly emphasised her local knowledge and personal association with the district. Furthermore, she carefully managed her Stop-the-War supporters by refusing to have any link up with the local Communist party – which had caused difficulty for anti-war candidates in English by-elections.<sup>82</sup> The Mass Observation report of the election noted that the campaign was unusual as both candidates displayed a decent amount of respect for each other and there were very few personal attacks.<sup>83</sup>

A few days before the election, the emphasis on the importance of national unity in the contest was highlighted when, during his final days in office, the Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain sent a message of support to Major Lloyd. He stated that he hoped the electorate would return Lloyd to show there was a 'national unity of purpose in prosecuting the war... by giving you their votes the electors of East Renfrew will show their support of the government.'<sup>84</sup> This type of statement of support was becoming commonplace for Unionist candidates across the country as the government sought to remind voters to show their support for them. The timing of the election was crucial, coming just as the full extent of the Norwegian defeats were being debated in parliament. It meant that those who were

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<sup>81</sup> Annie D Maxton, *ILP Stop-the War-Candidate, East Renfrew By-Election*, (Glasgow, 1940).

<sup>82</sup> MO Report, p. 10.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> *The Scotsman*, 7 May 1940.

unsure about supporting the government candidate may have been persuaded to do so given the seriousness of the international situation.

When polling day arrived on 9 May, it was reported that there seemed to be little local enthusiasm about the prospect of the election.<sup>85</sup> This may be due to the general consensus that Maxton's chances of winning were negligible. The lack of an exciting closely fought contest seemed to fill the electorate with a sense of languor. The final result came as no surprise to anyone, Lloyd winning by 34316 votes to Annie Maxton's 8206, on a 43 per cent turnout. Unhappy with the result, Maxton remarked that it was distressing that around 50000 constituents had not registered their vote.<sup>86</sup> However, it was the best result yet for a Stop-The-War candidate during the most crucial period of the war. Miss Maxton was never likely to win, but her share of her vote was far more impressive than other anti-war candidates had managed to achieve. In contrast to Andrew Stewart in Clackmannan she belonged to a political party which was able to organise an effective election campaign.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, a survey conducted by Mass Observation found that there was 11 per cent support for the Stop-the-War campaign in the constituency, which was considered a high proportion.<sup>88</sup> She was also cleverly able to exploit the sense of frustration with the government at the end of the 'Phoney War,' by combining not only an anti-war but a subtle anti-government message in order to appeal to those frustrated by war conditions. Her strong statements on social justice and pushing the government to do more for those working in industry helped draw in those voters not convinced by the anti-war sentiments alone. The timing of the East Renfrew by-election came as the tumultuous events of

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<sup>85</sup> MO report on East Renfrew, p. 17.

<sup>86</sup> *The Scotsman*, 11 May 1940.

<sup>87</sup> MO Report on East Renfrewshire by-election. p. b.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

Churchill's ascendancy to Prime Minister and the invasion of the Netherlands and Belgium which distracted any attention from the by-election. There was little comment made in the press other than a cursory mention that the government candidate was victorious. This contrasted with the aftermath of Clackmannan when several commentaries were published in different Scottish newspapers to reflect on the response of the public to the pacifist campaign. One such article branded the Stop-The-War movement to be 'insignificant political voices' or remarked that the electorate's response to their incursion into the by-election was one of 'disgust'.<sup>89</sup> The lack of press interest in East Renfrew suggested that the pacifist arguments had lost an real threat of being successful given the international situation which unfolded as the by-election occurred.

### **Patriotic not Pacifist?**

The ILP's candidature in East Renfrew was the last of the campaigns with a majority focus on the anti-war message fought in Scotland for the duration of the war. Despite the Communists contesting Dunbartonshire in February 1941 and the ILP contesting Glasgow Cathcart in April 1942, the overt Stop-the-War and pacifist pleas faded almost entirely from their election literature and in their campaign speeches. Instead the focus shifted to protesting against the coalition government and their handling of the war. These two by-elections have highlighted that the lack of appeal to pacifism in Scotland was potentially more surprising given the strength of support for left-wing parties in the Centre and West of Scotland. Parties such as the ILP and Communists had been heavily involved in the 1930s Peace Ballot and The Popular Front movement.<sup>90</sup> Angus Calder also commented that despite

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<sup>89</sup> *Dundee Courier & Advertiser*, 16 October 1939.

<sup>90</sup> Richard Davis, 'The British Peace Movement in the Interwar Years,' *French Journal of British Studies*, 22, 3 (2017), pp. 1-18, at pp. 3-5.

the strong response to peace initiatives and the higher levels of engagement with left-wing politics in Scotland, these ultimately did not translate into an inclination to vote for pacifist politics when the war actually dawned.<sup>91</sup> By-election candidates found it difficult to convert what was ultimately a feeling or belief into electoral action. Especially with the government also attempting to appeal to the emotions of the population through calling to their sense of moral obligation, asking them to vote for government-approved candidates for the good of the nation. The pacifism message failed to have much success after the summer of 1940 when the developments in Europe made seeking any form of peace with Hitler an impossible case to argue. Indeed, there were only four other contested by-elections held in the whole UK for the remainder of 1940, three of which featured pacifist candidates and they received less than 10 per cent of the vote share.<sup>92</sup>

Not only did the message fail to connect with Scottish voters, but to some extent bad luck affected the anti-war campaigners. The only constituencies which fell vacant in Scotland during the first year – the most potent period for the peace message – were not always constituencies which would be favourable to contest. Indeed, the only two suitable constituencies out of five which fell vacant were the two discussed above. It was especially difficult to have an issue-based campaign within the UK electoral system as it had to be ensured that a very strong support base existed in that particular constituency, or the candidate would not be elected. As a result, the anti-war elements in Scottish by-elections ended far sooner than Addison's nationwide model which he notes included anti-war candidates appearing in contested by-elections until the Kings Norton by-election of May

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<sup>91</sup> Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, (London, 1991), p. 71 & 76.

<sup>92</sup> Figures compiled from Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results*.

1941.<sup>93</sup> After Kings Norton, the tone changed with candidates challenging the electoral truce, ushering in new debates which displayed discontent with the political system. While on the surface it may have indicated that the lack of support given to anti-war candidates meant that Scotland was more unified behind the war and politically stable, in practice it was not so simple. Ultimately, it masked that from the spring of 1940 the grievances raised by minor parties and independents contained far graver concerns for the government. The new breed of by-election contestants moved away from pacifism and focused their appeals on democratic engagement, challenging the legitimacy of the electoral truce and ultimately the operation of politics as a whole.

### **From Pacifism to Patriotism – A Problematic Truce**

There would be a six-month hiatus after Clackmannan before the next by-elections occurred in April 1940 with Argyll and Glasgow Pollok both being contested with two weeks of each other. Between October 1939 and April 1940 there had only been seven contested by-elections elsewhere in the UK.<sup>94</sup> With the exception of the Cambridge University by-election, all had featured anti-war candidates and the narratives of the elections had been broadly similar. The narrative of the Argyll and Pollok by-elections were, however, quite different. Addison maps the emergence of candidates who cited the lack of democratic engagement caused by the electoral truce to the period between 1941 and 1942. This was mainly because of the spate of independent and Common Wealth party candidates successfully challenging government candidates in England.<sup>95</sup> However, in Scotland, as has been mentioned in the previous chapters, the lack of democratic engagement caused by the

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<sup>93</sup> Addison, p. 130.

<sup>94</sup> Figures compiled from Craig, *British Parliamentary By-Elections*. See Appendix A.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

electoral truce was raised as a concern across all parties as early as 1940. This may have been due to fact that the truce was agreed to by the parties in London, and perceived by party members in Scotland as an edict to follow without any say in the formation or direction of the policy.

The electoral truce was already being placed under strain nationally by early 1940. Divisional and local Labour parties across the country had the most trouble with the electoral truce agreement as they felt it supported the National Government to the detriment of party aims.<sup>96</sup> Thorpe noted incidents which occurred at several English by-elections came very close to breaking the truce. The first was Southwark on 10 February 1940, where the local DLP supported another Labour candidate standing as an independent pacifist, rather than its own party.<sup>97</sup> Then at Silvertown on 22 February 1940, the West Ham DLP were later disaffiliated for lending support to the Communist party candidate Harry Pollitt, rather than the official Labour candidate.<sup>98</sup> Both these occasions came close to breaking the truce, yet did not. The terms set out in the truce agreement stated that the other parties should not contest against the party which held the seat.<sup>99</sup> In Silvertown and Southwark these were technically Labour versus Labour incidents which perhaps do not warrant being classified as 'breaking' the terms of the truce. In Pollok, which will be discussed below, the truce was broken because it was a Unionist-held seat which would have been filled unopposed if not challenged by a local Labour party member standing as an independent candidate.

This section will consider the appeals made in the Argyll and Glasgow Pollok by-elections regarding the idea of the electoral truce as stifling "democratic engagement" and the

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<sup>96</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, pp. 190-1.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, p. 192.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>99</sup> LPA, NEC Files, Memorandum of an Interview held between the principal agents of the Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Parties, 14 September 1939.

response by the Unionist government candidates. It will also consider the use of the “undemocratic truce” argument by the SNP as its new by-election policy.

### **The Power of Patriotism**

The Argyll by-election was triggered by the death of the Unionist MP Frederick McQuisten on 29 February 1940. McQuisten had been the MP since 1924 and had planned to retire at the next general election.<sup>100</sup> The Argyll Unionist association had adopted a replacement candidate some time earlier in anticipation of a general election in late 1939 or early 1940, which was postponed when war broke out. The potential candidate was Major Duncan McCallum who was on military service in Egypt when McQuisten’s death was reported.<sup>101</sup> He was officially endorsed as the Unionist candidate on 16 March at the Argyll Unionist association meeting.<sup>102</sup>

The press had little time to speculate about whether the election would remain uncontested as the SNP had announced by 4 March that it was considering placing a candidate in the by-election as a ‘protest to the political truce determined by the big parties’.<sup>103</sup> This was one of the first occasions where the truce was outlined as being the primary reason for entering a by-election and contained no additional anti-war or pacifist inclinations. However, the SNP had outlined that it was only *considering* the opportunity to contest the election as there were still many elements for the party to debate before making an official declaration.<sup>104</sup> Financial viability was one major concern, namely the cost of contesting an election in the

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<sup>100</sup> *The Scotsman*, 2 April 1940.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/33, minutes of meeting of SCUA Western Divisional Council.

<sup>103</sup> *The Scotsman*, 4 March 1940.

<sup>104</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 214.

remote and rambling Argyll with wartime petrol rationing and difficulties obtaining reliable transport.<sup>105</sup>

Richard Finlay has discussed this election in his history of the SNP, however his work focused on the party-political aspect and the advantages it brought the SNP in terms of stimulating interest in party activities. Whereas the discussion below will consider what the narratives from the Argyll elections can tell us overall about the politics of the time. He argued that the party had issues regarding the direction of its policy since the outbreak of war. There was a split in the party between pro-war and anti-war supporters, with the pro-war supporters comprising most of the senior positions in the party.<sup>106</sup> Party Secretary John MacCormick was keen for any prospective candidate to have pro-war credentials to avoid the SNP being tarnished with both the anti-war and militant nationalist label by the press. Since the outbreak of war, MacCormick insisted on trying to work with other parties, mainly the Liberals, to achieve its aims rather than contest elections directly.<sup>107</sup> At the beginning of March 1940, MacCormick contacted J.M Bannerman of the Liberal party to discuss the possibility of endorsing his candidature provided he ran on a home rule agenda.<sup>108</sup> The potential deal with the Liberals was quickly dashed after a meeting of the Dunoon Liberal Association. In a statement to the press the association secretary stated that the party had decided to follow its leader Sir Archibald Sinclair's agreement to the electoral truce with the other parties, and refused to assist the SNP.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Cameron, *Impaled upon a Thistle*, p. 191.

<sup>106</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, pp. 208-10.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> NLS, Acc.6419 Box 44/1, minutes of meeting of national council, 2 March 1940.

<sup>109</sup> *The Oban Times*, 23 March 1940.

This left the SNP with the option of contesting the seat as it had no obligation to adhere to the electoral truce. Finlay argues that the SNP executive council were swayed by opportunism with the levels of unpopularity the government were experiencing nationwide but, also locally due to their policy decision in designating swathes of Argyll as a 'protected area'.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, when the SNP announced it would enter the contest the following quote was relayed to the press.

The SNP was not asked to take part in this travesty of democracy... nor would it have agreed which makes for virtual disenfranchisement of the Scottish people....after careful consideration of the circumstances the council of the party decided that it was imperative that we fight in the election and challenge the government's long neglect of highland affairs... never before have we had an opportunity for a straight fight against a government candidate.<sup>111</sup>

The council were also concerned about grass roots members' discontentment with the party's electoral inactivity since the commencement of the war. The party's organising secretary J.M McNichol reported at a national council meeting in March 1940 that out of 75 local branches only 29 were actively functioning.<sup>112</sup> The election came at a critical juncture for the party and presented an opportunity to both register its discontent with government policy in the Highlands, and also to show the membership that the party still retained a purpose.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 214. The protected area designation was due to various military camps being based in the Highlands for training. Locals were required to have their papers on them at all times and were routinely checked. See *The Times*, 27 February 1940.

<sup>111</sup> Acc.3721, Box 99/153, letter from J. Clark and W. Whyte to all party members, 21 March 1940.

<sup>112</sup> NLS Acc. 6419/44/1, National Council meeting 2 March 1940.

<sup>113</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 214.

The SNP's nominated candidate was William Power, a well-known journalist and writer who had strong credentials on supporting the war. He was chosen to appeal to progressive supporters of the Liberal and Labour parties.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, Power was not a popular choice with some of the national council members.<sup>115</sup> Many disagreed with his perspective on the war and as the *Glasgow Herald* noted, Power's views on the war differed completely from the majority of SNP supporters.<sup>116</sup> The press widely chastised the SNP for entering the campaign on an anti-truce agenda. The *Oban Times* ran with 'Scottish Nationalists Break Ranks.'<sup>117</sup> The article featured a statement made by Neville Chamberlain condemning the party for interrupting national unity at a crucial period of the war. *The Scotsman*, while less vocal in its articles on the subject, was nevertheless unable to keep the critical tone from its commentary. It reported that a nationalist representative had stated their intention to field a candidate as a protest vote against the London parties deciding on an electoral truce which prevented the citizens of Argyll performing their democratic duty.<sup>118</sup> Highlighting the electoral truce as being undemocratic was a clever deflection tactic employed by the SNP. It allowed it to argue that the truce prevented the Argyll populace from registering any discontent with the government. The SNP claimed that the idea of linking the electoral truce with national unity was actually stifling political debate. Arguments around unity were the crux of both candidates' campaigns. However, the two candidates differed in their perspectives of what it constituted to be patriotic. William Power argued that it was patriotic to demand that Scotland received a fairer deal from the British government. Whereas the National Government Candidate Major Duncan McCallum did not agree, he

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<sup>114</sup> *The Scotsman*, 13 March 1940.

<sup>115</sup> NLS, Acc.3721, Box 5, file 76, letter from Roland Muirhead to Emrys Hughes, 29 March 1940.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *The Oban Times*, 23 March 1940.

<sup>118</sup> *The Scotsman*, 4 March 1940.

insisted that the only acceptable form of patriotism for Scotland to display was within the framework of British national unity.

Major McCallum began his campaign at a slight disadvantage as he experienced numerous delays in returning to Argyll from Egypt where he was posted as an intelligence officer. He had to wait until 28 March to launch his campaign. He began by making statements to the press and holding outdoor public meetings emphasising that he was a local man while dismissing the SNP's challenger as being from outside the area.<sup>119</sup> Major McCallum wasted no time in ensuring his campaign narrative strongly adhered to the official government propaganda. He emphasised that any vote cast against the government at this crucial moment of the war – when much of Europe was threatened by German expansionism – was seriously damaging to national unity. At one public meeting, McCallum stated 'If electors allow their attention to be diverted from the real issue before the country, it may appear there is disunity in Great Britain.'<sup>120</sup> McCallum stressed that the SNP's willingness to disturb the truce was a disrespectful unpatriotic action forcing an election to be called when the country should be focused on fighting the war.<sup>121</sup> He placed the emphasis in his campaign that victory in the war had to remain the priority rather than tackling the problems in the Argyll area. These were matters for a time of peace rather than a time of war. Whereas the SNP candidate, William Power, argued that it was bad government policy that was causing Argyll to struggle to contribute fully to the war effort, which required immediate remedy.<sup>122</sup> Power did not think that breaking the electoral truce was very important or undermined the government in any way. Rather the truce was undemocratic and more damaging to national

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<sup>119</sup> *The Scotsman*, 29 March 1940.

<sup>120</sup> *The Scotsman*, 3 April 1940.

<sup>121</sup> *The Scotsman*, 30 March 1940

<sup>122</sup> Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, p. 192.

unity than the government facing opposition in a by-election.<sup>123</sup> Power addressed this issue in his election leaflet:

I make no apology for disturbing the so-called “political truce.” My faith in democracy enables me to believe that it can operate in war-time as well as in peace, and the “truce” is a subtle belittlement of your right to vote, to criticise...I will support any necessary war effort as readily as the government candidate.<sup>124</sup>

Power’s address highlighted an argument which the government used to great effect over the course of the campaign, namely that Britain’s enemies and allies were watching the result of the election. This was an attempt not only to appeal to the patriotic sentiment of the electorate but, to also instil a sense of shame that voting against the government would be a victory to the enemy. The government were essentially attempting to control the narrative of patriotic sentiment by categorising behaviours which were acceptable, and to subdue any other alternative ideas.

A letter written by fellow MP W McNair Snadden to the *Glasgow Herald* further confirmed the Unionists’ strategy.

What is more important – national unity or a protest about local grievances in a time of war, without it we face defeat. If Scottish national policy means anything it means disunion. Should the electors return Mr Power it will have struck a blow not for the Highlands but for Hitler. It does not take a particularly vivid imagination to envisage the

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<sup>123</sup> William Power, *County of Argyll Parliamentary by-election, 10 April 1940, Candidature of William Power, Election Address*, (Glasgow, 1940).

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

gloating of 'Lord Haw Haw.' Major McCallum should be sent to Westminster as the living symbol of Argyll's unity behind the government in their war effort.<sup>125</sup>

Snadden's statement about McCallum as a living symbol was very revealing. He indicated anything that wavered from support for the government was a betrayal of those fighting the war. The use of the detested 'Lord Haw Haw' in the government's campaign does show the nervousness within Major McCallum's ranks about the potential success of Power.<sup>126</sup>

Plainly, they had felt the only way to prevent the electorate supporting Power was by equating him to the enemy. By conflating the war effort and the government, the Unionist campaign could attempt to convince the voting public into believing that if they voted against McCallum, they were being unpatriotic and giving their support to the enemy.

Power was hopeful that despite the Unionists' best efforts to turn the electorate against him, he would be able to gain some Labour and Liberal voters who could not bring themselves to vote for a Unionist even in times of crisis. Additionally, he gained members of the electorate who were dissatisfied by the government and wished to lodge a protest vote against them. However, he could not capitalise on protest votes alone and this was where he struggled. A special article written by *The Scotsman* just before polling day commented that locals displayed a curious mixture of interest and apathy when asked for their opinion on the election. The correspondent commented on large turnouts at public meetings the candidates held, and lively exchanges in letter columns of all the local area newspapers.<sup>127</sup>

But, reported little discussion of the election beyond those locations. If the SNP were unable to whip up enthusiasm for its interpretation of patriotism from the locals, the chances of

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<sup>125</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 4 April 1940.

<sup>126</sup> Lord Haw Haw was the nickname for the Irish-American William Joyce. See Encyclopaedia Britannica online <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Joyce>. (accessed 05-12-2019).

<sup>127</sup> *The Scotsman*, 6 April 1940.

gaining a large enough support base to defeat the government were slim. Furthermore, Power was not a career politician and this was the first election he had ever contested. He was a skilled orator but was not as slick in his campaigning as McCallum who was an experienced politician with a larger campaign machine to assist him.

The final blow to the SNP's campaign occurred 24 hours before polling day when Norway was invaded on 9 April 1940.<sup>128</sup> This swung momentum back in the direction of the government. The government candidate's campaign was given the opportunity to capitalise further on the strategy it had been using of equating a vote for the SNP as a vote against the war. The government's appeals to the electorate to execute their patriotic duty had greater credibility. The final outcome of the election was Major McCallum won the seat by 12,217 votes to William Power's 7,398, and gave McCallum a majority of just over 5000. The *Glasgow Herald* reported that Power's post-defeat speech blamed events in Europe for turning support back towards the government.<sup>129</sup> Nevertheless, it was the SNP's best election result to date.

Overall, this election indicated that there was enough frustration with the government in Argyll to encourage some locals to lodge a protest vote. The SNP were able to claim that the electoral truce was not a necessary arrangement in order to ensure political co-operation between different parties, but was actually an attempt to subvert democratic engagement. The SNP positioned the party as the champion for ordinary democracy and a safeguard against the invasion of a Westminster power grab. However, it struggled to compete with the government in appealing to the idea of 'Scottish patriotism,' as the government's call for

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<sup>128</sup> Douglas C Dildy, *Denmark and Norway 1940, Hitler's Boldest Operation* (Oxford, 2007), p. 10.

<sup>129</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 13 April 1940.

the electorate to support national unity at a time of crisis was more persuasive. The SNP had few other options as it certainly could not oppose the war as this had failed for other candidates in other by-elections. The party's attempts to manipulate patriotic sentiment to convince the electorate that voting for Power was their patriotic duty to Scotland failed as national priorities overtook more local concerns.

Undeterred, the SNP planned to continue to use this strategy to portray the 'undemocratic' electoral truce as a reason to enter by-election campaigns. However, it was unfortunate in the viability of the constituencies which became available. It almost entered a by-election due to be held in Montrose Burghs in July 1940. However, after much discussion the party decided it was neither a viable constituency nor an appropriate time to enter a by-election, given the gravity of the national situation.<sup>130</sup> The SNP released a statement to the press which indicated its perspective on future contests.

The party considers itself to be in no way bound by the political truce and while last week at its annual conference it reiterated its full support to the war effort, it considers itself free to uphold the principle of democracy at future by-elections in Scotland.<sup>131</sup>

This statement was an attempt by the SNP to separate the idea of unity, the war effort and the truce, elements which had been increasingly conflated by National Government candidates and the press. The SNP tried to outline that it supported the war effort but it was not mutually exclusive with contesting an election. It was also a safeguard to make the party's perspective on the electoral truce very clear, then if a favourable opportunity arose

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<sup>130</sup> NLS, Acc.6419, box 44/1, special meeting of the SNP National Council, 3 July 1940.

<sup>131</sup> *The Scotsman*, 6 July 1940.

in the future, it would be able to contest. Argyll came close to upsetting the political status quo at a juncture where the government could scarcely lose any more support. Indeed, the arguments over the electoral truce were not to be confined to Argyll, for the government a far graver problem was about to emerge.

### **Party Problems at Pollok**

The Glasgow Pollok by-election has received little more than an occasional cursory mention in the current historiography of Second World War politics, despite it being the first occasion where the electoral truce was broken.<sup>132</sup> This is due to historians such as Addison, Harvie and Thorpe examining the wider context of the truce or the problems the Labour party were facing. The by-election is worthy of closer examination as it displays a growing sense of dissatisfaction in the Scottish Labour movement with the principles of the truce and the lack of consideration from the central organisations offered to Scottish branches of all political parties. As Harvie has argued, Labour party operations in the Glasgow area were plagued with numerous problems including Communist infiltration, poor organisation and a hostility towards the co-operation with the Unionists.<sup>133</sup> These local party-political factors ultimately caused the breaking of a truce which was agreed at a national level and almost placed the whole operation of the truce in peril.

The Pollok by-election was held as a result of the death of the previous Unionist MP Sir John Gilmour who passed away on 30 March 1940.<sup>134</sup> Because of the electoral truce there should have been little concern displayed by the Unionists that either Labour or the Liberals would

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<sup>132</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 193, Addison, 'By-Elections', p. 134, Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland', p. 928.

<sup>133</sup> Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland,' p. 926.

<sup>134</sup> John Ramsden, 'Gilmour, Sir John, of Lundin and Montrave, second baronet,' (1876-1940), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/33408> (accessed 23-07-2019).

contest the election, the natural focus would have been on the minor political parties. The prospective candidate in the district, Commander Thomas Galbraith – who was on active service at the time – would obviously have been hopeful of an unopposed return when officially announced as the Unionist candidate on 10 April.<sup>135</sup> However, attention in the press quickly moved away from the Unionists and towards the Labour party. After a meeting held on 7 April, the Pollok Divisional Branch made the surprise announcement that, irrespective of the electoral truce, it would be placing a candidate in the by-election. A statement was made to the press by the Pollok divisional secretary which outlined the reasons for entering the contest:

As secretary I cannot give my official support to our fighting the by-election in view of the party truce, it is on the association's own head...the Pollok associations view is that the executive of the socialist party agreed to the truce without consulting the rank and file and in a democratic party such as ours we should have the right to fight the election as we did not agree to the truce.<sup>136</sup>

The premise given by the secretary – that they had the right to contest as the NEC had agreed to the truce without consulting DLP's – was unconvincing. The Labour party were planning to seek approval for the truce at the 1940 Annual Conference which was to be held two weeks after the Pollok election.<sup>137</sup> As an affiliated branch they were bound to follow the guidelines set down by the NEC. *The Scotsman* reported on the story the next day and commented that the decision to put forward a candidate appeared to be rather on a whim.

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<sup>135</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/33, minutes of meeting of the SUA Western Divisional Council, 10 April 1940.

<sup>136</sup> *The Scotsman*, 8 April 1940.

<sup>137</sup> *1940 Labour Party Annual Conference Report*, (London, 1940).

The decision was made at the Pollok branch annual conference and was discussed under the 'any other business' section of the meeting. The decision to contest was won by ten votes to five, but eight members of affiliated bodies abstained as they had no mandate from their branches.<sup>138</sup>

It was outlined in the press statement that not only was the prospective candidate, John Nicolson, protesting against the electoral truce, but would also be standing as a 'Stop-The-War' candidate. The whole situation was considerably awkward for the Labour party as Nicholson was chairman of the Pollok DLP. The NEC elections sub-committee reacted furiously to the news of the break in the truce. During a meeting held on 10 April the decision was taken to send a warning to the branch that if they persisted in continuing with the nomination then the branch would be disaffiliated from the Labour Party.<sup>139</sup> The Pollok branch did not heed the warning, as during a meeting held on 11 April to consider the subject it voted by a majority of four to uphold the decision.<sup>140</sup> The NEC were forced to act quickly to protect the party from further damage caused by the decision, and also to ensure that other branches did not follow their example. On 12 April, the Pollok branch were disaffiliated and it was reported in the press that a new Pollok branch would be formed. Interestingly, Scottish organiser John Taylor stated that the Pollok branch had been undermined by Communist influences and re-organisation was necessary in any case.<sup>141</sup> Highlighting the potential influence of Communists within the branch and the by-election was possibly a clever deflection tactic by the Labour party to divert blame from Labour members to the Communists as a protection measure for other DLPs.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> LPA, NEC Files, election sub-committee meeting, 10 April 1940.

<sup>140</sup> *The Scotsman*, 12 April 1940.

<sup>141</sup> *Dundee, Courier & Advertiser*, 13 April 1940.

The question remained, would the by-election be a contest between the Unionist National Government candidate and the 'Independent Labour' candidate, or would any of the other minor parties stage their own intervention? The ILP announced fairly quickly by 16 April that it would not be contesting. It appeared the party was placing more focus on the East Renfrewshire by-election which was due to be held a week after the Pollok election on 9 May.<sup>142</sup> The following day, the SNP issued a statement that it would not be contesting. It declared that the results of the Argyll election had sufficiently shown that there was concern displayed by the electors regarding the government's handling of Scottish problems. The SNP added that it would be organising this opposition with the aim to contest every future by-election in Scotland.<sup>143</sup> The bluster in the statement was a hasty attempt to cover up that the party lacked the funds and organisational abilities to perform a speedy transition from campaigning in Argyll to fighting another by-election so soon afterwards.

The campaign messages from Pollok were almost an amalgamation of the two previous by-elections in Clackmannan and Argyll. There was the anti-war and peace perspective similar to the narrative in Clackmannan, plus the defiance for breaking the truce and entering into the by-election similar to the narrative in Argyll. When polling day was set for 30 April, the consensus across the district and the media was that Commander Galbraith would be returned unopposed, as it was believed Nicolson would drop out of the contest.<sup>144</sup> It was emphasised that Pollok was a safe Conservative seat with an *Evening Telegraph* reporter commenting that 'the Pollok socialists despairing of converting the constituency had determined on a display which would bring them notoriety.'<sup>145</sup> However, these beliefs were

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<sup>142</sup> *The Scotsman*, 16 April 1940.

<sup>143</sup> *The Scotsman*, 17 April 1940.

<sup>144</sup> *The Scotsman*, 18 April 1940.

<sup>145</sup> *The Evening Telegraph*, 8 April 1940.

mistaken as Nicolson had no intention of exiting the campaign or purely contesting as a publicity stunt. He began his campaign vigorously with a plea for peace declaring he demand 'peace of the people, by the people, for the people.'<sup>146</sup> Meanwhile the government candidate launched his campaign by rubbishing the claims of his opponent while dressed in his naval uniform, to highlight his credentials as one who had been personally tested by war.<sup>147</sup> Galbraith continued to emphasise throughout the campaign that he came from a background where his family had fought in the First World War and he also shared the concerns of parents in the present war as he had three sons involved. At one event he concluded this remark with, 'I ask you quite sincerely, am I or my opponent the more likely to desire peace.'<sup>148</sup>

*The Scotsman* gave ample coverage to the many campaign statements made by Galbraith, but only a short paragraph was accorded to Nicolson's opening statements at his event. As in the previous by-election campaigns, the press was clearly outlining its support for the Unionist government candidate.<sup>149</sup> In the national press, the Stop-the-War viewpoint of the 'Independent Labour' candidate was unlikely to receive much of a hearing. It was only in papers such as *Forward* where Nicolson's viewpoint would be expressed. Indeed, in an article for *Forward*, he chose to deflect the attention from the pacifist message in his campaign and focus more on the electoral truce as the reason for him entering the electoral fray.

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<sup>146</sup> *The Scotsman*, 23 April 1940.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *The Scotsman*, 27 April 1940.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

We regard the political truce as being a great blow against the traditional democratic rights and liberties and has the effect of literally disenfranchising the nation.<sup>150</sup>

Nicolson observed the issue which was discussed in chapter one of this thesis that many Labour organisations were upset by the terms of the electoral truce. He highlighted this concern, given that fifty branches had placed resolutions on the matter for discussion at the annual conference.<sup>151</sup> In terms of winning support in Pollok, the results at Clackmannan and Argyll demonstrated that the disenfranchising effect of the truce was more likely than the pacifist argument to win over uncertain voters. Unfortunately, *Forward* had a minor, more select readership which were already likely to echo Nicolson's viewpoint, therefore he was unlikely to gain many new supporters from his article.

Both candidates used their election literature to further address the fact that the electoral truce was broken. Commander Galbraith naturally emphasised his belief that 'the vast majority of the electors will feel a contested election at this time is both unnecessary and undesirable... The entire energy of the nation must be directed towards defeating the enemy.'<sup>152</sup> The statement was very similar in nature to Major McCallum's in Argyll, emphasising the need for unity to send a message that the Scottish people were united behind the government and the war. Galbraith also attempted to neutralise Nicolson's anti-truce arguments: 'While I am a supporter of the government, that is not to say I believe it to be beyond criticism.'<sup>153</sup> This may have been an attempt to quell concerns from voters that

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<sup>150</sup> *Forward*, 20 April 1940.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/127, Address to the Electors of Pollok from Commander Thomas Galbraith.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

all National Government candidates would acquiesce with all the government's ideas and not question their decisions — as a backbench MP would traditionally do in peacetime.

Meanwhile, Nicolson's address attacked the truce on every level:

There can be no truce between the Labour movement and the National Government... There is no truce in the governments attack on the people of Scotland... Political and civil liberties fought for by generations of Scotsmen and women are endangered by the Emergency Powers Act.<sup>154</sup>

Nicolson's statement in equating the restrictions of the truce and the Emergency Powers Act was interesting, as it was argued in the previous chapters that conflating these two ideas caused confusion about the nature of the truce. Yet again, there was a sense in Nicolson's statement that the two ideas were intertwined and that political choices were being attacked. Nicolson was emphasising that the political environment was being affected by decisions made outside Scotland.<sup>155</sup> It suggests an attempt to place both the restrictions on everyday life experienced by Scots, and the inability to make a political decision as compelling reasons to lodge a protest vote against the government.

Regardless of Nicolson's optimism, his prospects of winning were remote. Not only was Pollok a very safe Conservative seat, other by-election results thus far had been poor for any candidates with a pacifist element to their campaign. Nationally, the highest vote percentage won by a pacifist candidate was 27 per cent during the Kettering by-election in March 1940, with almost all other candidates losing their deposits.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, the anti-truce message championed by the SNP in Argyll, while more successful, still fell short of

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<sup>154</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/127, Election address from John Nicolson.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Figures compiled from Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*.

winning over the electorate. The task of persuading voters in Pollok with a combination of those messages would be an even more arduous task for Nicolson.

The result of Pollok did not alter the pattern established above. Commander Galbraith won with a majority of 15,449 votes to Nicolson lost his deposit.<sup>157</sup> Nicolson accepted the defeat but noted that 2401 voters in a 'Tory stronghold had come out in declaration against the present government, it was a factor that must be considered by the government in its future actions.'<sup>158</sup> The government candidate had, unsurprisingly for all involved, triumphed in the by-election. However, for the Labour party, the Glasgow Pollok election was a major problem. The unease regarding the electoral truce and the policy of Chamberlain's government was causing DLPs to question the party's support for the government and the truce. Labour was most fortunate that the coalition was formed only a few weeks later and circumvented the issue of party members revolting against the terms of the truce to stand in by-elections. For the SEC of the Labour party, the Pollok by-election left it dealing with some disaffection and opposition to official party policy. Scottish organiser John Taylor noted that this had calmed after the annual conference, but there were still rogue troublemakers sowing seeds of discontent in branches throughout West Scotland which would be monitored carefully.<sup>159</sup>

The Glasgow Pollok by-election result was never in any doubt, regardless of it being the first break in the electoral truce. The arguments made by both candidates did not stimulate much beyond cursory press attention. After the initial outcry regarding the intrusion of the Labour party member into the campaign and the details of the DLP's disaffiliation, there was

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> *The Scotsman*, 2 May 1940.

<sup>159</sup> LPA, minutes of meeting of the executive of the Scottish Council of the Labour Party, 31 May 1940.

little excitement caused by either candidates' campaigns. Had the coalition not been formed shortly afterwards, the events of the Pollok election could have had far reaching consequences across Labour party branches and its relationship with the truce. Ultimately, the election was merely a blip in the general atmosphere which emerged after May 1940 as being mostly in favour of the formation of a coalition government and the continuation of the electoral truce.

### **Scotland's Problematic Politics?**

The by-elections discussed in this chapter highlight some divergence in political patterns from the general picture of British politics during this period. The fact that Scotland provided the first contested by-election and the first official break in the electoral truce indicates some discontent with the political situation in the country. There are several reasons for this: the general election which had been scheduled for late 1939 or early 1940 was postponed leaving Parliament unchanged and a sense of political stagnation.<sup>160</sup> This situation was of course not exclusive to Scotland. The dissatisfaction experienced in Scotland was amplified because the decisions which affected politics in Scotland were dictated by central party management in London. What was apparent from these by-elections was if too much democratic choice was eroded by a central authority, those who were excluded would find a way to rebel. Minor parties not included in the decision-making process used the only means available to them to lodge a protest, and the only option available was to contest a by-election. This can be illustrated by examining the figures from the contested by-elections in Scotland and comparing them to the rest of the UK. By

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<sup>160</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 16.

totalling the votes cast against the three main parties, it becomes easier to map that discontent.<sup>161</sup>

**Figure 2**

Rest of UK By-elections	Votes cast for candidates against mainstream parties	Scotland by-elections	Votes cast for candidates against mainstream parties
Battersea North	791	Argyll	7,308
Kettering	6,616	Clackmannan & East Stirlingshire	1,060
Leeds North East	722	East Renfrewshire	8,206
Middleton and Prestwich	418	Glasgow Pollok	2,401
Stretford	5,943	<b>Total Votes</b>	<b>18,975</b>
Southwark Central	2,932		
West Ham, Silvertown	1,117		
<b>Total Votes</b>	<b>18,539</b>		

**Figure 3**

	Total electorate in by-election constituencies	Total votes cast in by-elections & average turnout	Votes for mainstream parties	Votes against mainstream parties
<b>Rest of UK</b>	396,207	145,354 (36.6%)	126,815 (87.2%)	18,539 (12.8%)
<b>Scotland</b>	231,843	99,103 (42.7%)	80,128 (80.9%)	18,975 (19.1%)

These figures suggest that across the period under discussion in this chapter, political engagement in Scotland was more volatile, given that four by-elections in Scotland produced a larger number of votes number of votes cast against the government than in

<sup>161</sup> The Cambridge University by-election of 23 February 1940 has not been counted as it was a university by-election. These did not follow the same voting patterns as mainstream by-elections in peacetime. In wartime they were an anomaly as the electoral truce did not really apply, candidates did not stand for the main parties, they would often run as independents. Given the sporadic voters who took part in the elections offering any clear analysis as to what the results indicated would be impossible. See T.L Humberstone, *University Representation* (London, 1951), for a detailed explanations and analysis of University by-elections. The table was compiled from Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*. I added the total number of votes for candidates not from the mainstream parties together to reach the figure above excluding the Cambridge University figures.

seven by-elections in the rest of the UK. The second table indicates this in terms of percentage as well as showing the differences in votes cast for mainstream parties. It also showed that turnout was higher in the Scottish by-elections, albeit on a smaller total electorate. However, this factor has been considered and using the by-election statistics from Appendix A, the average electorate per constituency in Scotland was 57,960 and in the rest of the UK by-elections 56,601.<sup>162</sup> Overall, the tables indicate that there may have been some protest voting occurring against mainstream parties in Scotland.

The by-elections examined thus far, point to some interesting features in Scottish politics during the early years of the war and indicate a divergence from Addison's suggested model. In Scotland, the appeal to pacifism died out far quicker with East Renfrewshire being the last by-election fought solely on a pacifist agenda. There were of course pacifists in Scotland, but the problem of fighting a by-election based on the issue was that it was unlikely to have a large enough number in one constituency to successfully win a by-election. It was clear that favourable constituencies where candidates would not lose their deposit were relatively rare, therefore building a campaign solely on pacifism was not a successful option.

These by-elections also displayed that discontent with the electoral truce was raised far quicker as a reason to contest than the rest of the UK. As observed earlier in the chapter, concerns around democracy and the truce were arguments which gained more legitimacy in Scotland as the truce felt like a decision that had come from London. It affected political engagement in Scotland but did not allow the parties in Scotland any say over how they

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<sup>162</sup> See Appendix A for the total electorate for the constituencies, but the figure was calculated by adding the total electorate of the Scottish by-elections and dividing by 4, and the same for the Rest of the UK but dividing by 7.

would operate. The atmosphere of consensus created by the truce was something which minor parties such as the SNP found stifling and did not reflect their ideas on the democratic process of by-elections. This realisation did not come until later in the rest of the UK when the Common Wealth party filled the vacuum created by the lack of political engagement in wartime. In Scotland, this political vacuum was always going to be filled quickly due to the existence of the three minor parties – The Communists, the ILP and the SNP – concentrated in a smaller area. It was more difficult for parties such as the ILP and Communists to contest by-elections in England as they only had support bases in very specific areas. The constituencies which fell vacant in Scotland were located in the west coast and central belt areas, where bases of support for the ILP, the Communists and the SNP already existed. Consequently, there was a greater chance of at least one of the minor parties deciding to contest hoping to gain further anti-government support.

The three main parties survived the electoral challenges they faced for the first two years of the war, albeit with a close call for the Unionists in Argyll. However, the newly formed coalition government began to struggle with the many problems they faced at home and abroad. The political atmosphere in Scotland with increased scepticism towards the government and the electoral truce was in danger of increasing and potentially leading to the ultimate disaster of losing a by-election.

#### **Chapter Four – The Nullifying of National Unity: Themes in Scottish Parliamentary By-Elections 1941-45**

“Government of the people, by the people, for the people – not for government of the people by party politicians by their party machines.”<sup>1</sup> This statement given by Independent by-election candidate William Douglas Home indicated that the arguments employed by candidates standing against government nominees acquired a different flavour from 1941. The prevalence of anti-war arguments as sole reasons for contesting dissipated. Instead, candidates from the Communist Party and ILP integrated their anti-war tendencies into campaigns which emphasised their dislike of the coalition government and its policies. The same situation occurred with the campaigns which focused solely on the electoral truce as a suppressant of regular electioneering. The requirements of the electoral truce became more binding due to the formation of the coalition. A candidate from the three main political parties no longer solely represented their own party interests, but also that of the government. Hence the reason for the shift in focus from non-government candidates. They were able to exploit any frustration within the electorate by blaming the ‘government’ as a homogenous entity for whichever grievance they wished to highlight. In some respects, what candidates meant by the term ‘government’ became as capricious as the shifting terminology applied to the truce.

The idea of being an ‘anti-government’ candidate was one which could entail many different interpretations: from objections to the existence of the coalition government, its policy and handling of the war, to pure political brinkmanship. The term also came from the definitions which were given to these independent or minor party candidates by

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<sup>1</sup> William Douglas Home, *the Independent Victory Candidate, Cathcart Division Parliamentary By-election 1942*, (Glasgow, 1942).

contemporaries. These descriptions began subtly with the government as the ‘official candidates’ and non-governmental candidates were referred to by the press as independents. However, as the by-election defeats grew for the government, independents were re-labelled as anti-government by the mainstream press.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the term was liberally applied even when the candidate expressed support for Churchill or the government to successfully win the war. To a wartime press heavily pushing government propaganda, anyone who defied the electoral truce and broke the atmosphere of unity to stand was marked out as anti-government no matter what the circumstances. The term ‘non-government’ candidate would perhaps have been more appropriate.<sup>3</sup> The criticisms applied to the government over their policy decisions, or handling of the war did not always equal open defiance; it was simply candidates disagreeing with some aspects of government policy. Regardless, the press coverage of the by-election condemned these candidates to be ‘anti-government’ simply because they were not a part of the coalition.

### **Condemning the Coalition**

One of the most notable differences between Scotland and England which will be explored in this chapter was that in England when non-government candidates used the term ‘government’, they would customarily mean the Conservatives, not the Coalition. The Conservative party was guilty of forgetting it was not the only party in government. This was displayed by the Conservative candidate at Grantham in 1942, during an election address he referred to ‘the opposition parties, both Liberal and Labour agreed not to contest in the

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<sup>2</sup> Earliest references to ‘anti-government’ candidates appeared in the *Gloucester Citizen* during the Hornsey by-election campaign in May 1941. References in *The Scotsman* appeared from 1942.

<sup>3</sup> From an extensive search in the *British Newspaper Archive online*, the only mention of the phrase non-government candidate was used in the *Dundee Evening Telegraph and Aberdeen Press and Journal* when referring to ‘two non-government candidates’ contesting at the Hampstead by-election, 29 & 30 September 1941.

national interest'.<sup>4</sup> Evidently, some Conservatives were still not reconciled to the nature of the coalition by this stage of the war. Non-government candidates were also guilty of this misdemeanour, at both the Chippenham and Daventry by-elections in 1943, the government candidates were continually referred to under their own party terms, specifically as 'a Tory'.<sup>5</sup> However, Labour still maintained oppositional political behaviour, thus encouraging other parties to treat them as such. It will be noted throughout this chapter that Labour displayed contradictory behaviour. The party had since the truce was agreed intimated that they were free to act as an independent political force, but were instrumental in the creation of the by-election 'coupon statement' which forced the party to work closer with the Conservatives. This resulted in the party playing the 'opposition' card when it suited the gaining of political capital, or the coalition card when faced with internal party issues. It was arguable that Labour utilised the coalition in a similar way to the Conservatives use of the truce, as a convenient ace card to play when political issues or relationships became difficult to manage.

In Scotland, Unionists always claimed to represent the 'National Government,' but at this point Labour candidates were required to wear that label and it was at times uncomfortable for many in the party to be co-operating with the Unionists. This was due to friction in some areas of Scotland where there had been disagreements between Labour and the Unionists about filling town council vacancies, the requirements to work closer together caused unease within Scottish Labour.<sup>6</sup> Labour candidates also received some of the fiercest criticism in Scotland for supporting the Conservative-led coalition, whereas the

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<sup>4</sup> MO Report 1177, 'The Implications of Grantham', 30 March 1942, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> MO Report 1669M, 'Daventry By-Election April 19 1943', p. 6 and MO Report 1892, 'Chippenham By-Election Aug. 24 1943', pp. 6-7.

<sup>6</sup> LPA, SEC minutes of meeting, 18 April 1942.

Conservatives were more heavily punished in England. Indeed, out of the five Scottish by-elections under discussion in this chapter, three of the government candidates were from the Labour party. Although the SNP and ILP had made it a mission to try and contest as many Unionist held seats as possible, the presence of a Labour party candidate was not a reason to deter them.<sup>7</sup> Addison had observed a tendency in English by-elections for a variety of independent candidates to come forward and attempt to oust Conservative government candidates on an agenda which was heavily critical of government policy. He noted during the course of 1942, that out of twelve Conservative-held seats which fell vacant, eleven of those resulted in a contested by-election. Whereas for Labour, out of thirteen vacancies only two by-elections were contested.<sup>8</sup> It is not possible to offer a similar comparison for Scotland as there was only one by-election contested during 1942. However, as the table below illustrates, when comparing the figures across the six years of war for Scotland, out of twelve contested by-elections, six contests featured Unionist government candidates with one uncontested. However, by-elections which featured Labour candidates were five out of twelve contested elections.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 4**

<b>By-elections with Unionist 'government' candidates</b>	<b>By-elections with Labour 'government' candidates</b>
Argyll	Clackmannan & East Stirlingshire
East Renfrewshire	Dunbartonshire
Edinburgh Central	Hamilton
Glasgow Cathcart	Kirkcaldy
Glasgow Pollock	Motherwell
North Midlothian	

<sup>7</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 233 and LPA, ILP NAC Minutes, 25 May 1940.

<sup>8</sup> Addison, 'By-Elections,' p. 130.

<sup>9</sup> Compiled from Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*.

Furthermore, one uncontested election featuring a Labour candidate at Greenock was intended for contest until the Communist withdrew days before the election.<sup>10</sup> When comparing these results, it was apparent that the minor parties in Scotland were unwilling to lose the opportunity to contest an election even if a Labour member was involved. The ILP was angry with the Labour party for remaining in coalition with the Conservatives and sought to punish it as much as it was able to. The SNP was against all London-based parties, especially if they were unwilling to support its aims of 'self-government', which during this period shifted from a home-rule to a more independence focused model. This was a vision of that none of the other Scottish parties shared. Therefore, these elements of the minor parties' individual concerns would naturally lead to a more contentious political environment. In Scotland, therefore, when the term 'government' was used it most often referred to the coalition and there was a little less emphasis on the anti-Conservatism as expressed in England. The figures above indicate that there was certainly a more anti-coalition feeling in Scotland compared with the wider national contempt for Conservatism.

### **The Movement Away from Party**

One of the predominant issues in the historiography of Second World War politics is the issue of the 'movement away from party.' Stephen Fielding has noted that the presentation of wartime by-elections as just expressing public frustrations is too simplistic an interpretation.<sup>11</sup> The movement away from party during the middle years of the war was a movement away from the practice of party politics. He notes that in the Grantham by-election of April 1942, the independent candidate Denis Kendall subverted the narratives of

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<sup>10</sup> MO Report, 778, Greenock By-Election Campaign, p.25.

<sup>11</sup> Fielding, 'Movement Away from Party', p. 49

national unity by claiming the Conservatives phrase of 'country-before-party' as his reason to 'break' the truce. To Kendall and other independents, party politics was the real issue that faced national unity. Thus, by standing as independents, it was they who were truly placing country before party.<sup>12</sup> However, in Scotland, this movement away from party politics was not as strong. Party factionalism was continually present for the duration of the war. Indeed, the percentage share of votes cast for candidates standing from minor political parties increased. Although many candidates pledged to support Churchill, they did not see that as a reason to stop criticising the government. Irrespective of the joint statement from the coalition party leaders which was sent to every government candidate after 1942, active support between the coalition parties in Scotland was in short supply during by-election campaigns. Labour party members were reluctant to openly campaign or offer support for Conservatives, and at the final by-election in Motherwell, all coalition references had been dropped from the Labour candidate's campaign. In Scotland therefore, when the term 'anti-government' was used it meant the candidate had a grievance against the coalition and its policies: especially their policies for Scotland. An example can be seen from the Communist candidate at Dunbartonshire, Malcolm McEwen who expressed on his election literature 'I enter this election to enable the people of Dunbartonshire to voice their protest against the policy of the coalition government.'<sup>13</sup>

The previous chapter discussed the irritation with the electoral truce as a suppressant of normal electoral engagement. This chapter will consider that this shifted after the formation of the coalition government when candidates fused irritation with the electoral truce and

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Malcolm MacEwen, *Dumbartonshire By-Election Address, 27 February 1941* (Glasgow, 1941).

the government together. By-election contests became one of the few ways to register criticism against the government and its decisions. The difference between Scotland and England was that, in the former, there were already minor political organisations in place to act as the vehicle for this discontent, and to capitalise on protest votes. In England fringe parties did not enjoy the same prominence, hence the emergence of independent candidates, then the Common Wealth party, to fill this gap. The importance of minor party politics in Scotland will be discussed through examining the by-election contests, ultimately displaying that there was a stronger continuation of party politics in comparison with the rest of the UK.

For ease of understanding the table below outlines the by-elections which will be covered in this chapter and also those which were omitted or uncontested.

**Figure 5**

<b>By-Election</b>	<b>Date of Election</b>	<b>Candidates</b>
Dunbartonshire	27 February 1941	Bailie Adam McKinlay (Labour) Malcolm MacEwen (Communist) Withdrew: Private Robin MacEwen (SNP)
Glasgow Cathcart	28 April 1942	Francis Beattie (Unionist) James Carmichael (ILP) Hon. William Douglas-Home (Independent Progressive) William Whyte (Independent Scottish Nationalist)
Kirkcaldy Burghs	17 February 1944	Thomas Hubbard (Labour) Henry Hilditch (Christian Socialist) Dr. Douglas Young (SNP)
Motherwell	12 April 1945	Alex Anderson (Labour) Dr. Robert McIntyre (SNP)
North Midlothian & Peeblesshire	11 December 1943	Sir David Murray King (Unionist) Thomas Wintringham (Common Wealth)
<b>Omitted elections from this chapter</b>		
Combined Scottish Universities	9-13 April 1945	Sir John Boyd Orr (Independent) Ronald Munro (Liberal National)

Edinburgh Central	11 December 1941	Frank Watt (Unionist) Tom Taylor (ILP)
Hamilton	29 January 1943	Thomas Fraser (Labour) John Lethem (Independent)
<b>Uncontested Elections</b>		
Edinburgh West	12 July 1941	Iain Clark Hutchison (Unionist)
Greenock	10 July 1941	Hector McNeil (Labour) Withdrew: Gunner Robert Cooney (Communist)

### **Methodology for Selecting the By-Elections.**

There were five by-elections held during this period which will not be discussed in this chapter. The three omitted by-election featured campaigns which were not worthwhile examples to discuss due to several reasons. Primarily, they were contests which the opposing candidate posed little threat, both in terms of the narrative of their election campaign or in achieving victory. At Edinburgh Central, the ILP candidate entered the contest very late and according to Mass Observation and press reports, public engagement in the election contest was poor. This was further demonstrated by the extremely low turnout at 29 per cent.<sup>14</sup> Hamilton was not a newsworthy campaign either, it featured an independent candidate standing on very specific local issues. As there were six by-elections being held throughout the UK within two weeks of Hamilton, the press was more heavily focused on other contests especially those featuring Common Wealth candidates. Indeed, when the Hamilton result was announced, one newspaper report observed ‘the contest will be remembered as one of the quietest in the divisions history.’<sup>15</sup> Finally, there was the Combined Scottish Universities by-election. As university seats were counted differently,

<sup>14</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 580.

<sup>15</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, 31 January 1943. They also noted that not one member of the public was there to hear the result.

normal electioneering rules did not apply and the sprawling nature of the electorate made it difficult to draw any firm conclusions from the result. The seat was won by an independent but pro-home rule candidate; however, the result was eclipsed somewhat by the SNP result in Motherwell a few days earlier.<sup>16</sup> The press reports focused more heavily on Motherwell and the university result was overshadowed as a result. There was almost a fourth contested by-election which had been due to be held in Greenock in July 1941. A Communist party member was operating a full campaign until four days before the election, when he withdrew after the party's official line changed with Russia's entry into the war.<sup>17</sup> The final uncontested by-election of the war in Scotland was also from July 1941 and was located in the Edinburgh West constituency. However, unlike Greenock and Montrose, (mentioned in the previous chapter) which both came close to being challenged, the Edinburgh West constituency was never planned to be contested by any of the small parties.<sup>18</sup> The Edinburgh West by-election was probably the least controversial and duller of all the by-elections held in Scotland for the duration of the war, but ironically it followed the pattern of the majority of by-elections held across the rest of the UK during this period by being unopposed.<sup>19</sup> The fact that this by-election was fairly typical by wartime standards but was an anomaly in Scotland, is yet another indication that there were fundamental differences experienced by Scotland compared to the rest of the UK.

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<sup>16</sup> *The Scotsman*, 16 April 1945.

<sup>17</sup> MO Report, 778, Greenock By-Election Campaign, p.25.

<sup>18</sup> *The Scotsman*, 14 July 1941.

<sup>19</sup> Addison, 'By-elections', pp. 130-1. The typical patterns of by-elections in this period tended towards unopposed elections. There were only five contested by-elections between July 1940 and July 1941 across the whole UK out of a total of 28. One of which was Dunbartonshire and the others were Northampton, King's Norton, Hornsey and Dudley. Data compiled from Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*. See Appendix A for the results of these contests.

The five by-elections which will be studied in this chapter will be used to further examine the themes raised in the previous chapter. They will particularly focus on the increase of 'anti-government' sentiment in Scotland from 1941 onwards, and determine what this meant for political operations. The latter half of the chapter will explore the insular focus on domestic Scottish issues from 1943 until the end of the war. It will consider the importance of political expression in Scotland, most predominately, the idea that by-elections came to be used as an informal indicator of public sentiment towards the government.

### **Forestalling a Fraternal Fracas**

The Dunbartonshire by-election of February 1941 is a difficult election to categorise as there were several rather odd elements involved. One of the main problems was the heavy emphasis the Labour party placed upon the Communists' peace policy in its campaign. Unfortunately for Labour, the Communist candidate was far more interested in attacking the coalition government, monopolies in business and the lack of a socialist agenda from the Labour party.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the Communists stated on the very final point of its lengthy list of election pledges that it sought a way out of the war which neither capitulated to Hitler nor defeated him, a policy which seemed to lack any concrete plan. Otherwise there was little emphasis by the Communist candidate on the fact that the party were aiming for some form of peace. Therefore, this by-election has been categorised as anti-government rather than anti-war based on the evidence from the election literature and the candidate's speeches. It would have been incorrect to place this by-election under the banner of anti-war simply because the Labour and government candidate chose to attack it as so.

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<sup>20</sup> *The Milngavie Herald*, 15 & 22 February 1941, and Bailie Adam McKinlay, *Election Address Dumbartonshire By-election 27 February 1941* (Glasgow, 1941).

The county of Dunbartonshire was an unusual mix of wealthy upmarket areas near Glasgow and heavy industrial areas near the Vale of Leven – which was incidentally nicknamed ‘Little Moscow’.<sup>21</sup> It also had the disadvantage of being an extremely large scattered constituency with some areas very difficult to reach under both wartime and winter conditions. A Mass Observation report written about the election noted that people felt psychologically at a distance from the war, particularly the emphasis on the blitz in the south and appeals to the concept of national unity fell flat.<sup>22</sup> This did not help any government candidates who focused their election narratives so heavily on these very ideas.

The constituency had changed hands between the Unionists and Labour several times since 1918. But when the by-election was called in 1941, it was a Labour candidate who represented the coalition parties. The chosen candidate was Bailie Adam McKinlay who had previously been an MP and had extensive political experience.<sup>23</sup> It became apparent very quickly that this was not a by-election which would remain uncontested. On the same day as the resignation of the previous member Thomas Cassells became public, the Communists held a meeting and announced that the party would enter the by-election.<sup>24</sup> The candidate it chose was rather surprising as until 1939 he had been a prospective Labour party candidate and former County Councillor for Ross-shire. Malcolm McEwen, son of the SNP Honorary President Sir Alexander McEwen, claimed he had resigned from the Labour party to join the Communists in protest at the electoral truce agreement with the Conservatives.<sup>25</sup> He began his challenge by attacking the coalition government and Labour’s part in it, swiftly

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<sup>21</sup> MO Report No.593, Dumbarton by-election, 15 February 1941, p. 1. See also Stuart Forbes Macintyre, *Little Moscows: Communism and Working-Class Militancy in Inter-War Britain* (London, 1980).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p 3.

<sup>23</sup> McKinlay, *Election Address*.

<sup>24</sup> *The Scotsman*, 21 January 1941.

<sup>25</sup> MacEwen *By-Election Address*.

establishing his election narrative. It is particularly important to note how much McEwen focused on directing his anger towards the coalition government in his statements. For the Communists it was important to highlight to potential voters Labour's part in the government. Although the Communists were still technically an anti-war party, this stance was not over-emphasised in the opening speeches of the campaign. Instead the coalition, monopolies and the government's mishandling of industrial relations were the topics raised by McEwen.<sup>26</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, campaigns that focused around an anti-war message had not resonated with the public. At this stage of the war, it was even more unlikely to succeed, hence the reason the party did not focus the campaign in that direction. However, there was a dual aspect to the movement away from the pacifist message as the Communists also had personal reasons for expressing anti-governmental sentiment. The party were heavily involved in the 'People's Convention,' a left-wing movement designed to consider an alternative people's government. It was founded in the summer of 1940 and by January 1941 had gathered enough support to hold a meeting attended by over 2000 delegates. It was heavily criticised in the mainstream press and rather coincidentally the party's newspaper, the *Daily Worker*, was suppressed the next day under Civil Defence Regulations.<sup>27</sup> As Angus Calder has noted, the Scottish edition of the paper sold especially well in the industrial regions of Scotland, becoming a vital tool in aiding the party to reach more workers and increase membership.<sup>28</sup> The suppression of the paper meant the party had very few outlets for its message. This combination of events increased resentment towards the coalition within the party. It was the Labour Home Secretary Herbert Morrison

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<sup>26</sup> *Kirkintilloch Herald*, 12 February 1941.

<sup>27</sup> House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series (*Hansard*) 22 January 1941 vol. 368, cols. 185-90.

<sup>28</sup> Calder, *Myth of the Blitz*, pp. 86-8.

who had been one of the main figures behind the banning of the paper. One positive factor the Communists could draw from the events was it allowed the party to gain some public sympathy by playing up its harsh treatment, this was especially effective in eliciting left-leaning supporters who were concerned by the levels of government's interference in daily life.<sup>29</sup>

Once the Communists made its intentions clear, the press began to question whether the ILP and the SNP would enter the contest. For the ILP, it was the most favourable constituency since its last by-election candidature in East Renfrew, but the ILP still sought to discuss prospects locally before committing a candidate.<sup>30</sup> However, these enquiries were obviously not met with success as there was no further mention of an ILP candidate in the press. The SNP had amended its policy in the run up to the by-election deciding that it would 'refrain from contesting elections against candidates prepared to support the Home Rule or plebiscite demands.'<sup>31</sup> The previous policy, to enter every by-election possible, which was announced after the party's failure to contest Montrose in July 1940, barely lasted six months. The inconsistent and interchangeable policies of the party were beginning to cause internal issues.<sup>32</sup> During the weeks preceding the Dunbartonshire by-election, John MacCormick wrote to the Labour party to gauge its perspective on holding a plebiscite after the completion of the war. If Labour indicated it was in favour of a plebiscite, then the SNP would not run a candidate in the election. The SNP hoped to force the Labour party to openly declare support for a plebiscite. Thus far it had only indicated tacit support for the idea in correspondence.<sup>33</sup> Labour knew the SNP's incursion could cause problems for the

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 83.

<sup>30</sup> *The Scotsman*, 27 January 1941.

<sup>31</sup> Acc.6419/Box 44/1, minutes of meeting of the National Council, 11 January 1941.

<sup>32</sup> Finlay, pp. 217-19.

<sup>33</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 219.

successful return of its candidate if the vote was split between three candidates rather than two. The SNP issued a statement to the press declaring its intentions:

The council of the SNP in considering its attitude to the Dunbartonshire election had before it a friendly reply from the Labour party in response to its recent approaches. It was decided however to seek further assurances before a final decision could be reached.<sup>34</sup>

This dithering approach was proving to be increasingly unpopular with the party membership who felt that McCormick was too easily swayed by empty promises.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, the SNP were not convinced that the Labour candidate Adam McKinlay truly supported a plebiscite on home rule.<sup>36</sup> Thus the party decided to enter a candidate itself. At the behest of John MacCormick, the decision was made that whoever was chosen could not be an anti-war candidate, for the safety of the party.<sup>37</sup> The party built up the announcement of the prospective candidate claiming it would cause 'dramatic developments.' The SNP were not wrong in this assumption. When it announced the candidate was to be Private Robin McEwen, brother of the Communist party candidate, the press coverage was widespread.<sup>38</sup> The SNP also announced in the same press statement that it would be willing to withdraw if the Labour party candidate agreed to raise the matter of Scottish self-government at the culmination of the war. This would suggest the choice of candidate was something of a stunt and a deliberate effort to cause controversy in the electoral contest. Records from the meeting which decided this course of action concur, given that the SNP

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<sup>34</sup> NLS, Acc.6419 Box 44/1, minutes of meeting of the SNP national council, 1 February 1941.

<sup>35</sup> Finlay, p. 219.

<sup>36</sup> *The Scotsman*, 14 February 1941.

<sup>37</sup> Finlay p. 219.

<sup>38</sup> *The Scotsman*, 15 February 1941.

was choosing a candidate who may not be able to stand. Robin McEwen was on active service and had not yet secured permission from the military authorities for his candidature.<sup>39</sup> MacCormick was adamant that they should continue with McEwen and to continue to pursue the support of the Labour party for self-government. Several other council members advocated they instead ask another available candidate to stand.<sup>40</sup> The national council were unhappy with the lack of decision making, the former party leader Andrew Dewar Gibb remarked that all this 'shilly-shallying was not good for the party prestige.'<sup>41</sup> However, the SNP candidate barely had a chance to begin campaigning as very quickly it became apparent that the military authorities would not grant Robin McEwen permission to contest. It later emerged that there had been miscommunication between McEwen and his senior officer about seeking permission to stand. Due to delays, his written request was not received until nomination day when it was too late.<sup>42</sup>

Once the SNP exited the field, the by-election became slightly less newsworthy, given the controversy of the two contesting brothers had been removed. The remaining candidates mostly argued over policy, with McEwen criticising Labour for betraying Socialism by joining the government and McKinlay berating his Communist opponent for his views on peace. Indeed, McKinlay adopted an almost Unionist-level of emphasis on the idea of national unity, insisting the Communists' intervention was purely a political abstraction and intended to cause a nuisance.<sup>43</sup> However, McEwen outlined in his election literature that he was not

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> NLS, Acc.3721, Box 99/157, minutes of meeting of the SNP Executive, 15 February 1941.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> *The Scotsman*, 26 February 1942 & 24 March 1942.

<sup>43</sup> *Milngavie Herald*, 15 February & 1 March 1941.

entering the contest on a whim or to evangelise on the benefits of peace, he had a strong dislike for the policies of the coalition government.

I enter this election to enable the people of Dumbartonshire (sic) to voice their protest against the policy of the coalition government which the Labour candidate supports... in this election there are only two policies: that of the government, for which the Labour candidate must accept responsibility in its entirety, and that of the Communist party.

The emphasise on Labour's inclusion in the coalition and that it shared in the decisions made in government, was MacEwen's method to remind voters that Labour was no longer an independent body. As the truce and the coalition had drawn Labour into government, the Communists were claiming the voice of the Labour movement for itself. Indeed he tries to encourage voters to use their vote as a protest against the policy of the coalition government, '*you* can protest by withholding your vote from the government candidate.'<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, it was apparent that McEwen's main reason for entering the by-election was not purely to seek peace. In his election communication, apart from his final statement on not supporting the government's war policy, the previous seven sections all outlined anti-government sentiments.<sup>45</sup> Whereas McKinlay's literature placed refuting peace at the centre of his election policy. One communication contained four bullet points outlining his most important policies – three of which mentioned peace.<sup>46</sup> A Mass Observation report written on the by-election considered that the Communists message did not translate to the local area, because of the intense focus on the political side of the anti-government and

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<sup>44</sup> McEwen, 'Election Address'.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

anti-profiteer ideas. It did note that McEwen made no comment at any point that he was for 'peace', as other Communist candidates had previously stated at by-elections.<sup>47</sup> Labour focused almost entirely on national unity and anti-communist messages. The issue was simplicity; the government candidate's message was a straightforward appeal to unity which the electorate were accustomed to, and knew what action was expected of them – to follow government advice. Whereas McEwen was asking them to look deeper into the government operations and the political system as a whole. This was not an easy message to translate, and certainly not to an electorate who were overworked and stressed under wartime conditions.<sup>48</sup>

One form of unity that the Labour candidate found to be in short supply was support from the other coalition parties. Not being a Liberal area, the party was entirely absent from consideration, while the local Unionist Association appeared to offer no help nor encourage its members to vote for the Labour candidate.<sup>49</sup> There was no message from the Prime Minister as the election was held in the period before the joint party leaders' statement was issued to candidates. Attlee did send a message of support, which was strongly critical of the Communists entry in the campaign. He stated that he hoped McKinlay would be elected with a big majority.<sup>50</sup> This was rather ironic, as it was observed in the first chapter of this thesis how indignant the Unionists became when Labour appeared to stick solely to the basic requirements of the electoral truce and not support its candidates at by-elections. This

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<sup>47</sup> MO Report, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, pp. 3-4.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> *The Scotsman*, 25 February 1941.

indignation came over a year before the date of this by-election, yet the Unionists were not so committed to helping the coalition as it demanded of others.<sup>51</sup>

It had always seemed unlikely that the Communist party would triumph, even though the constituency was probably one of the most favourable in Scotland for the party's policy. The question was more about whether it could secure enough support to save its deposit. The answer after the constituency went to the polls was, surprisingly, yes. Adam McKinlay secured 21900 votes to Malcom McEwen's 3862, with turnout at 39 per cent.<sup>52</sup> It had been the highest number of votes cast for a Communist candidate since the start of the war and, as mentioned, a saved deposit.<sup>53</sup> While the result was a fairly emphatic victory for Labour, for the Communists it was a small victory and displayed that moving away from overt peace campaigning towards a narrative critical of the coalition government was a more successful policy to implement. There was a pool of discontented Labour supporters unhappy with their party's decision to join the coalition who were ripe for conversion. It was also by all accounts a missed opportunity for the Communists to tap into the vial of dissatisfaction which the MO report commented on as existing in the industrial areas around Dunbartonshire. Furthermore, another MO report on morale around the Glasgow area published on 7 March 1941 commented that there was a lack of identification with the war. It was considered at times to be an 'English War' and, in general, thoughts about unity and loyalty were 'unformulated and unconscious.'<sup>54</sup> It was noted in the MO report for Dunbartonshire that the Glasgow morale report findings were applicable in the area.<sup>55</sup> These accounts display that there were some psychological issues at play in the region

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<sup>51</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/32, minutes of meeting of the SCUA Western Divisional Council, 10 January 1940.

<sup>52</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 622.

<sup>53</sup> MO report, Dunbartonshire p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> Mass Observation Report No 600, Preliminary Report on Morale in Glasgow, 7 March 1941, p. 2a.

<sup>55</sup> MO Report, Dunbartonshire, p. 3.

regarding unity. Consequently, if McEwen had a more coherent message he could have tapped into that discontent within the electorate and achieved a far higher percentage of the vote.

What was notable about Dunbartonshire was the transitional nature of the election. Anti-war parties such as the Communists and the ILP began to re-configure their tactics towards arguing against the coalition government and its policies, especially those which related to workers and industry as they hoped to sway Labour voters. As much as they hoped to secure peace, there was also a sense in the parties that they needed to emphasise the idea less, and focus more on the grievances towards the government as the method to convince the electorate to reject the unity narrative.<sup>56</sup> Another unique feature from Dunbartonshire was the bargaining tactics used by the SNP attempting to coerce Labour support for a self-government plebiscite. This was not seen in other by-elections elsewhere in the UK precisely because the issue was a central plank of SNP party policy. The very fact that the SNP used this as a bargaining device, indicated that the atmosphere of political contest was stronger in Scotland with minor parties continuing with politically motivated behaviour.

It was also important to reflect upon the fact that the Dunbartonshire by-election commenced a narrative which focused discontent towards governmental failures a good few months before the trend identified by Addison began to take hold nationwide. He traces the beginning of this anti-government sentiment which lasted through to 1943 at the Hornsey by-election of May 1941 with the arrival of carpetbagger Noel Pemberton Billing – a prominent by-election candidate from the First World War – as being the first of its kind to

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<sup>56</sup> Thorpe, 'Locking out the Communists', p. 229.

campaign openly against the government.<sup>57</sup> However, the evidence presented above proposes that the Communists' campaign in Dunbartonshire, which heavily focused on criticism of the coalition government and its policy, was the first entirely 'anti-government' campaign, pre-dating Hornsey by almost three months. Therefore, this indicated Scotland diverging slightly from the model laid out by Addison. As Mass Observation reports detailed, the atmosphere in Scotland during this period was a little more restless and receptive to this type of anti-government sentiment. A lack of consideration from central authority and bearing the brunt of government regulations, such as the Protected Areas Act, perhaps was taking a toll on the populace.<sup>58</sup> Calder noted that the Communists were doing well in Scotland in the latter part of 1940 capitalising on the gap left in the political sphere by Labour entering the coalition.<sup>59</sup> The central belt area had pockets of socialist and Communist support which the left-leaning minor parties in Scotland could persuade to switch their votes. Some of which were located in the Dunbartonshire constituency and certainly provided the Communists with a better result than it had previously experienced. These subtle differences show why Scotland's by-elections do not quite fit the pattern of wider UK by-elections.

### **Grievances with the Government**

The Glasgow Cathcart by-election in April 1942 holds the title for being the most contested by-election in Scotland during the war, featuring no fewer than four potential candidates. Although they stood for their own individual reasons, the one campaign aim that united the non-government candidates was to take a stance against the government in one form or

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<sup>57</sup> Addison, 'By-Elections,' p. 130-1.

<sup>58</sup> Royle, *A Time of Tyrants*, p. 97 & pp. 194-5.

<sup>59</sup> Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, p .84.

another. The election was held on 29 April 1942 coming during one of the most crucial military phases of the war, a factor which the government candidate naturally used as his central message against his opponents.<sup>60</sup> During this period Glasgow Cathcart was an extremely safe Unionist seat and had returned a Unionist MP in every election since 1922.<sup>61</sup> This was one of the reasons why this seat was heavily contested, as both the ILP and SNP had previously declared their intention to contend against the Unionists at every available opportunity.

The Cathcart by-election was contested in the first instance due to the death of the previous Unionist MP, and the party quickly announced the candidate would be Frances Beattie, a baker and well-known figure locally.<sup>62</sup> The ILP and the SNP also rapidly announced the entry of their prospective candidates, Bailie James Carmichael for the ILP, and William Whyte for the SNP; both of whom had varying levels of experience in politics. Carmichael had been active in the Glasgow Town Council for over twenty years, whereas William Whyte, a chartered accountant, outlined no previous experience in electioneering anywhere in his campaign literature.<sup>63</sup> There was another surprising entry into the Cathcart election with the first entirely independent candidate since Clackmannan in 1939.<sup>64</sup> William Douglas-Home was not affiliated with any political party – at least during this period of his life – and stood as an independent progressive candidate on the premise that he disagreed with Churchill's

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<sup>60</sup> Addison, 'By-Elections,' p. 133.

<sup>61</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 587.

<sup>62</sup> *The Scotsman*, 2 April 1942.

<sup>63</sup> William Whyte, *To the Electors of the Cathcart Division of Glasgow*, (Glasgow, 1942) and Bailie James Carmichael, *Election address in the Cathcart Division of Glasgow Parliamentary By-Election*. (Glasgow, 1940).

<sup>64</sup> This statement is asserted because any previous independents such as the nominee at Glasgow Pollock in April 1940 actually belonged to a political party but had chosen not to name themselves as such and stand as independents.

policy of unconditional surrender.<sup>65</sup> The character of the by-election, therefore, was an eclectic mix of opinions on various aspects of coalition policy, with each candidate highlighting their grievance against the government. It could be said that this by-election in many ways reflected frustrations within the electorate over the government's policy and the direction of the war.

The government candidate naturally assumed the typical narrative of the need for national unity claiming that Hitler would be delighted to see a lack of national unity in Scotland.<sup>66</sup> His consistent message at campaign rallies emphasised that voting for him would maintain the national unity of purpose in prosecuting the war, allowing the electorate to demonstrate their support for the government.<sup>67</sup> He also addressed concerns about Scottish affairs given the SNP's entry into the contest, both in his public meetings and in his election literature. He stated that he was 'deeply concerned about our native land,' and he wished to 'shape a prosperous post-war Scotland which I regard as an essential post-war aim.'<sup>68</sup> It was notable that Beattie insisted that these were issues for the post-war era and not a consideration at that particular moment. Other than declaring his passionate concern for Scottish industry, there was very little variance in Beattie's appeal compared to the previous Unionist candidates in all Second World War by-elections. It was business as usual, maintaining the focus on supporting the government and emphasising that nothing was more important than national unity.

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<sup>65</sup> Jason Tames, Home, William Douglas, (1912-1992), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, accessed 17-12-2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/50977>

<sup>66</sup> *The Scotsman*, 21 April 1942.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/127, SCUA Papers, Francis Beattie election address for the Cathcart Division of Glasgow, 28 April 1942.

Beattie's firm stance on Scottish industrial needs as being a concern had an unusual effect in this by-election. The SNP candidate William Whyte, after tendering a nomination and launching his campaign, suddenly announced his intention to withdraw from the election on 13 April. He cited a positive discussion he had with Beattie over his interest in Scottish affairs, and had agreed that reform of the delivery of Scottish administration was needed. He also noted the ILP candidate was pro-home rule and therefore the need for him to contest on behalf of improving matters for Scotland was not required.<sup>69</sup> However, Whyte's friendly manner towards the other candidates quickly evaporated. Not three days later, after attending one of the Unionist campaign meetings, he announced that he must re-enter as a matter of principle. Beattie had declared at the meeting that he did not believe in the aims of the SNP to set up a Scottish parliament, rather he had merely agreed with Whyte that some measure of reform was required over Scottish affairs.<sup>70</sup> Whyte held an impromptu gathering outside the hall after the Unionist meeting was over to announce he would be re-entering the contest.

The plot continued to thicken, as Whyte did not re-enter the campaign as an SNP candidate, instead declaring himself an independent nationalist. Finlay noted this may have been due to the ongoing trial of SNP member Douglas Young, who was a controversial anti-war figure.<sup>71</sup> Finlay believed that John MacCormick and the pro-war wing of the SNP were determined to maintain the SNP's reputation. Therefore the deliberate removal of the SNP name from Whyte's election campaign was an attempt to minimise accusations that it was anti-war.<sup>72</sup> This muddled set of circumstances coupled with a very watered-down version of

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<sup>69</sup> *The Scotsman*, 14 April 1942.

<sup>70</sup> *The Scotsman*, 17 April 1942.

<sup>71</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 227.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 226-227.

SNP policy in Whyte's election literature led to some confusion over what he intended to stand for – given Whyte supported the war and Churchill but not the rest of the government. There were also elements of the SNP campaign in Argyll where Whyte disowned the political truce, claiming that disputed by-elections were not 'evidence of national disunity but sound proof of the vigour of our democracy.' He even blamed his re-entry into the campaign as being the fault of the 'Tory party machine,' as he had fully intended to co-operate with the other parties to achieve a common aim, but the Unionists had prevented it.<sup>73</sup> This was a last ditch attempt on the part of the SNP to coerce the coalition parties into supporting Scottish home rule in order to prevent its incursion into a by-election. It had used this strategy since the Dunbartonshire by-election of 1941. By this point, it had become very weak and, as Finlay has observed, was entirely killed off by Cathcart, resulting in the SNP party split in May 1942.<sup>74</sup> Whyte tried to approach the electorate with ideas which had worked well for the party in Argyll. The SNP's aim was to appeal to Liberal and Labour voters by condemning the 'Tory Party Record.'<sup>75</sup> The policy it promoted pushed for more war industry in Scotland and was interspersed with references to the need for a Scottish parliament. It was notable that the mention of self-government was placed at the end of the election address, most probably to prevent floating voters being deterred by an openly nationalist agenda. Whyte had little policy detail and his election address was mostly a list of complaints about government policy he disliked, indicating that his pro-Churchill but anti-governmental stance was brinkmanship and

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<sup>73</sup> Whyte, *Election address*.

<sup>74</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>75</sup> Whyte, *Election address*.

nothing more. It was not a polished election agenda and highlighted that the SNP campaign machine required some professionalisation.

For the ILP, Cathcart was only the third by-election it had managed to contest since the outbreak of the war. The party had struggled to find favourable constituencies where it would save a deposit. Bailie Carmichael's appeal focused heavily on dual and interlinked issues, the need to end the war to secure peace and once the peace was secured that a Socialist Britain needed to be implemented. Carmichael framed his appeal to the electorate in a way which harked back to the early stages of the war – that this was a war fought on imperialist and capitalist lines. His election address was quite obscure; it did not have mass appeal and would be difficult for most of the electorate to fathom why they should lend the ILP their vote. The emphasis was mostly on attacking key members of the government regarding statements they had made towards Germany, arguing about the threat of Russia and the lack of self-government for India. Carmichael's final appeal in his election communication stated that supporting the government meant supporting the capitalist system and the continuation of the war.<sup>76</sup> The subtle linkage of the current system of government with the continuation of the war was an attempt to win over the working class vote who may have strayed to one of the other candidates. However, the method the ILP used to frame these issues was similar to the Communists in Dunbartonshire, which were too obscure to appeal to the electors of Cathcart. Overall, the election campaign in Cathcart underlined deeper issues within the ILP at this juncture. There were some internal issues resulting in a three-way dispute between several Glasgow branches, the Scottish Divisional

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<sup>76</sup> Carmichael, *Election Address*.

Council and the National Council.<sup>77</sup> It was mostly over control of decision-making, but indicated that it was losing its way as a party.

Douglas Home, the independent candidate, did not change the pattern established by the other anti-government candidates in their election addresses. His was a vague appeal to cut all red tape as to aid the military effort and help expand the war effort. Similarly to appeals made by independent candidates in English by-elections, he attempted to subvert ideas of national unity by declaring that there could be no unity amongst the party machines.<sup>78</sup> He claimed he stood for a people's government and that party politics was not a true unifier of the people.<sup>79</sup> He briefly outlined his ideas of building peace after the war and home rule for Scotland and the empire. However, his main focus was on the need to stop party politics and politicians from ruining national unity. This was used against him at an eve of poll rally by Walter Elliot, who was speaking on behalf of the government candidate. He ridiculed the idea that the war could be won without parties. Elliot asked where the unity and discipline to finish the job would come from.<sup>80</sup> However, Douglas Home had latched onto an idea that was popular at the time. A Mass Observation survey on 'Attitudes towards the Political Truce,' conducted just a few weeks after the Cathcart by-election, revealed most respondents were against the truce. Many of the respondents commented on their dislike of the party system in general, and were happy to see independents contesting by-elections to allow more freedom of choice.<sup>81</sup> Therefore the entry of a non-party affiliated

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<sup>77</sup> LPA, ILP NAC Minutes, 7-8 February 1942.

<sup>78</sup> Fielding, 'Movement Away from Party' p. 49.

<sup>79</sup> Douglas Home, *Election Address*.

<sup>80</sup> *The Scotsman*, 28 April 1942.

<sup>81</sup> MO Archive, Report No. 1267, Attitudes to the Political Truce, 18 May 1942.

candidate was potentially more dangerous for the Unionists than the incursion of the minor parties.

The most unusual aspect of the final Unionist rally was the inclusion of Communist party members speaking on behalf of Beattie. An article in *Forward* questioned the wisdom of this strategy given the difference of opinion the two parties held on almost every subject.<sup>82</sup> The article mentioned that it was perhaps a ploy to help win over Labour supporters who may switch their vote to independent candidates. In Cathcart it was obviously to prevent votes being lost to the ILP. Despite the best efforts of the three non-government challengers, the Unionist candidate did triumph, winning by nearly 11000 votes and scoring a majority of over 6000.<sup>83</sup>

Overall, the narrative of the Cathcart by-election was one of the few Scottish by-elections which fitted with the wider trends of by-elections held in the UK during the first quarter of 1942. This was due to the main theme of the election being discontent with the way the government was managing the war. The anti-government sentiment displayed at the Dunbartonshire by-election the previous year had been maintained due to the fact that no other by-election was contested in the meantime. This crucial period saw the government defeated by independent candidates at Grantham, Wallasey and Rugby.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, the Rugby and Wallasey by-elections were held the same day as Cathcart.<sup>85</sup> As the government held onto the Cathcart seat, it explains why that by-election has not been considered by historians. These three elections where an independent candidate triumphed over the government were not repeated in Scotland. The government were fortunate that at

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<sup>82</sup> *Forward*, 18 April 1942.

<sup>83</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 587,

<sup>84</sup> Addison, 'By-Elections', pp. 131-2.

<sup>85</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p.262 & p. 489.

Cathcart the anti-government vote was split three ways. The total votes cast for the government was 10786 and the total votes cast for opposition candidates was 7300.<sup>86</sup>

Although the Unionists still won almost 3500 more votes than the anti-government candidates, it is possible had there been only one anti-government candidate, as in Rugby, the chances of capitalising on the protest vote may have aided an independent win. William Whyte's message was too confusing to have any real appeal, and the pacifist message which underlined the ILP's anti-government message was not so palatable to the electorate by this stage of the war. The independent nature of Douglas Home's candidature proved more popular than either of the minor parties and he was second to the government candidate. With a better run campaign and no other challengers, he may have picked up more protest votes which were not tainted by the pacifist or nationalist policies of the other two candidates.

However, some distinctive conclusions can be drawn by comparing the English by-elections to Cathcart. First, incursions by non-government candidates into by-elections in England was fairly sporadic and unpredictable. They depended on the strength of local independent candidates as minor political parties were not as fortunate as to have support bases all across England. Scotland was a smaller area geographically with fewer elections contested and two minor parties operating.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, the chances of a contested by-election from a member of a small party were very high indeed. The lack of truly independent candidates in Scotland was due to the existence of the ILP and SNP, (and the Communists pre-July 1941). The main reason independent candidates in England contested elections was to ensure the

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> I exclude the Communists from this analysis as it had stopped contesting by-election after July 1941 and supported the government.

government faced some form of protest.<sup>88</sup> There was less need of that in Scotland as the ILP and SNP were able to place candidates as a contestant to the government. This allowed the public the option to express their discontent with the government via the ballot box if they so wished. Because of the year-long hiatus between by-election contests in Scotland, there was not a massive change in the trend towards anti-government sentiment. There was little opportunity for any radical deviation from Addison's model, therefore, Glasgow Cathcart remained on trend. This was in contrast to the preceding election at Dunbartonshire which was ahead of Addison's model, and the subsequent election at North Midlothian which would continue to plot Scotland as temporarily on same track as the wider UK elections.

### **Containing the Common Wealth**

The political party which was formed by the peculiar circumstance of the electoral truce, the Common Wealth party, had yet to attempt to break into the Scottish electoral sphere. This changed at the North Midlothian and Peeblesshire by-election of February 1943. Common Wealth had been gaining ground in England throughout 1942 on an anti-truce and anti-government agenda, expanding the movement to see what response it would receive from the public. The party was concerned by its concentration in the London and the South of England region and decided to expand its support base.<sup>89</sup> It was more coincidental that the Midlothian vacancy became available rather than a deliberate target on that constituency. The vacancy was caused by the previous MP John Colville being appointed Governor of Bombay.<sup>90</sup> Within a few weeks of the vacancy being announced, the Edinburgh branch of the Common Wealth party declared that it would be placing a candidate in the by-

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<sup>88</sup> Addison, 'By-elections,' p. 133.

<sup>89</sup> Calder, *Common Wealth Party*, Part 1, pp. 119-120.

<sup>90</sup> *The Scotsman*, 5 December 1942.

election.<sup>91</sup> It decided upon Tom Wintringham – known for his work in founding the home guard. This was a surprising choice given his lack of local connection. The reason the committee gave for reaching this decision was that his reputation and record outweighed that of other local candidates.<sup>92</sup> This lack of local connection was quickly noted by the Unionist candidate Sir David King Murray, who questioned whether it was necessary for a non-local candidate to be drafted in to unnecessarily contest an election at a crucial juncture of the war.<sup>93</sup> The Unionist candidate was not announced until 2 January 1943, due to the fact that the local Unionist and Liberal associations had agreed to jointly back a candidate from the district. Murray therefore claimed that he stood as a truly ‘national’ candidate, as so many of the coalition candidates had previously claimed, but in his case the name was actually justified.<sup>94</sup> Murray also tried to appeal to potential Common Wealth party backers by indicating that the Labour party would officially be supporting him. He argued that without securing victory through unity, none of the progressive ideas in the Beveridge report could be implemented.<sup>95</sup>

Murray was overly optimistic in his predictions of Labour backing; the local Labour party only voted to support him by a tiny majority. The SEC of the Labour party had been aware that it may have problems with this local party adhering to the truce and had planned for an official statement to be given.<sup>96</sup> Scottish Secretary of the Labour party John Taylor, emphasised that the party’s ‘partnership in the government carried with it the responsibility of supporting the return of the government candidates in by-elections, and it was the duty

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<sup>91</sup> *The Scotsman*, 21 December 1942.

<sup>92</sup> *The Scotsman*, 22 December 1942.

<sup>93</sup> *The Scotsman*, 4 January 1943.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> LPA, minutes of meeting of the SEC Executive Committee, 12 December 1942.

of Labour party members to implement that decision.<sup>97</sup> However, as noted in chapter two, many DLPs and party members disliked the idea of supporting a Unionist against a candidate who was much more aligned with their own ideals. The local Labour party members ignored official advice and offered their support to Wintringham, becoming valuable allies in recruiting local working class support.<sup>98</sup> This was fortunate for Wintringham as he had no full-time help at all, without Labour assistance his ability to campaign against the larger Unionist machine would have been seriously curtailed.<sup>99</sup>

The narrative of the campaign was at times confusing and a little disjointed. The Common Wealth party focused the campaign on its pet project – the idea of common ownership. It also tried to discredit Murray's narrative of being a national candidate rather than a Unionist as it suited the contention that the Conservative party was not winning the war fast enough because of private monopolies.<sup>100</sup> Wintringham declared that he did support Churchill but did not support the overall government and the way it was prosecuting the war.<sup>101</sup> This allowed him to ensure he did not deter supporters but still retained enough anti-government sentiment to draw in the discontented and Labour voters.

The press coverage was largely negative towards the Common Wealth party incursion and often remarked that the candidate was not Scottish and had been parachuted in from Southern England. There was also a great deal of emphasis on the fact that Murray stood for national unity and the electoral truce.<sup>102</sup> As mentioned in chapter two, this was rather ironic considering Murray himself referred to the truce as the 'parliamentary truce', a term which

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<sup>97</sup> *The Scotsman*, 8 February 1943.

<sup>98</sup> Calder, *Common Wealth Party*, p. 132

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *The Scotsman*, 23 January 1943.

<sup>101</sup> *The Scotsman*, 10 February 1943.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

was not used by any other candidate. It had not been referred to as the 'parliamentary truce' since the First World War.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, Wintringham referred to the truce as the 'political truce,' displaying both candidates' differing attitudes to what the truce truly meant. For Wintringham, playing up the political restrictions both the truce and the coalition government placed on normal politics would explain why he was thinking of the truce in terms of it being political. For Murray, he was discussing the Labour party obeying the truce when he mentioned that it was 'parliamentary.' It is possible that he conflated the idea of the coalition government and the electoral truce and arrived at parliamentary. This is yet another example how interchangeable the truce terminology had become and the casual manner in which politicians referred to it.

The joint statement of support sent by the coalition leaders came through very early in the campaign on 25 January with the election itself not due to be held until 11 February. The statement encouraged voters to consider the message it would send around the world if they showed their support for the government and it was their responsibility to do so.<sup>104</sup> It highlighted that the government were seriously concerned about the result. Indeed, Churchill sent a message of support telling the electors of North Midlothian that it was 'their duty to elect the national government candidate.'<sup>105</sup> *The Scotsman* also promoted this message, featuring a gushing editorial the day before the election commenting on what a valuable asset Murray would be as an MP to the Midlothian electorate. They also attempted to tarnish the credentials of the Common Wealth candidate by emphasising his sympathy for Russia and his forgiving their previous pact with Germany. The article then reminded

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<sup>103</sup> *The Scotsman*, 3 February 1915.

<sup>104</sup> *The Times*, 25 January 1943.

<sup>105</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 10 February 1943

voters that King Murray would uphold national unity if elected, in an unsubtle attempt to pressure voters into supporting the government.<sup>106</sup>

The mainstream press did not allow Wintringham to speak for himself, the only paper which awarded him the chance to communicate his viewpoint was *Forward* where he was allowed a full page to express his policy. Wintringham stated that the Common Wealth party were 'butting in' to the election because the 'political truce' disbarred Labour from contesting. He claimed the truce also helped to swell the ranks of the Conservative party with more MPs who would simply follow party policy and would not propose any controversial legislation, all but hindering the war effort.<sup>107</sup> Wintringham also aimed his policy at the poor industrial planning which had drawn Scots away from their home country to the Midlands and the south. He noted that only certain areas of the country were benefiting from an industrial boom.<sup>108</sup> He claimed that Common Wealth policy, which aimed to spread wealth and opportunity across the whole country, was the answer to Scotland's industrial problems. During this period of the war it was a message which had some traction within the constituency, especially amongst Labour voters who were reluctant to back the Unionist candidate. Wintringham acknowledged it would be a difficult campaign to win as a new movement with a local organisation in its infancy, declaring that winning would be 'a political miracle.'<sup>109</sup>

However, the North Midlothian electorate nearly enacted that miracle. The final result was Murray 11620 votes to Wintringham's 10751 on a turnout of 35 per cent.<sup>110</sup> Murray seemed

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<sup>106</sup> *The Scotsman*, 10 February 1943.

<sup>107</sup> *Forward*, 2 January 1943.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 638.

unabashed at his very slim majority of 869, declaring it was due to 'war-time conditions.' He then remarked that the election had been an attack on the coalition, but the electors had given the right answer as the country had no use for factional strife.<sup>111</sup> In the aftermath of the result, *The Scotsman* published an opinion piece which highlighted that the election was actually a bad result for the Unionists irrespective of the fact they won. It noted the dramatically reduced majority and low turnout which suggested that Unionist voters had abstained from voting, not only due to the truce, but because Unionist voters felt 'apathetic and moribund about election contests at present.'<sup>112</sup> *The Scotsman* observed that the most politically aware and enthusiastic about politics tended to come from the left of the political spectrum.

The problems faced by the Unionists in the early part of 1943 have been highlighted by Calder and Addison. Mainly that, as a party, it struggled to retain voters' interest in ensuring the return of its candidates against self-motivated and enthusiastic opponents who offered the facility of a protest vote. Calder noted that the movement away from party from mid-1942 onwards, plus the stagnating effect of the truce had left the public feeling as though their votes in by-elections actually made little difference to the government.<sup>113</sup> This underlying feeling in public attitude hints at the reason the Common Wealth party did so well in the by-election at that particular period.

Although it came close to a successful result, the Common Wealth party did not contest any other Scottish seats. From examining Calder's extensive thesis on the Common Wealth party, it does not appear that this was deliberate. It was mostly due to organisational

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<sup>111</sup> *The Scotsman*, 13 February 1943.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Calder, *Common Wealth Party*, part 1, pp. 72-3.

strength and the attitudes of the public. Calder argued that the party were weakest in Wales and Scotland, not only due to their more radical political traditions, but also due to the difficulty in both travel and communication to these areas under wartime conditions.<sup>114</sup> As it was almost a year before another by-election was held in Scotland, this was a long time in the life of a new movement which needed to maintain focus. There were by-elections to be contested in England which were a more attractive prospect for the party. There seemed to be little point in expending time and effort to sustain a movement which would struggle to find a place amongst the already crowded field of Scottish left-wing minor parties. Instead, it found a niche by filling the vacuum of minor party politics in England caused by the absence of Labour. In Scotland, Common Wealth's presence was not required, as party politics continued for the duration of the war. While it focused on a progressive socialist agenda filling the gap in the electoral system left by the Labour party, political ideas in Scotland soon turned more insular due to the SNP contesting the final by-elections of the war. The political agenda focused on Scotland and how it could recover from the war rather than the wider turn towards a Socialist-Liberal agenda.

### **Diverging trends?**

The non-government candidates had begun the process to consider the best methods to deal with Scotland post-war with their arguments against the coalition government and its policies. Some of the decisions the government had made regarding Scotland during the war were unpopular and showed a lack of awareness that sometimes Scotland required a different approach.<sup>115</sup> The electoral atmosphere had been gently prepared for candidates to

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<sup>114</sup> Calder, *Common Wealth Party*, part 2, pp. 83-91.

<sup>115</sup> This includes decisions regarding the movement of Labour, especially young Scottish females which was controversial, see House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series (*Hansard*) 06 August 1942, vol. 382 cols. 1159-60. Unemployment issues see House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series (*Hansard*) 14 March 1940 vol. 358 cols.

look beyond the war and consider the future. This was where the trend of by-elections in Scotland began to differ from the rest of the UK. Addison identified that by-elections held between 1943 and 1945 tended to focus more on a Liberal or Socialist agenda.<sup>116</sup> Once again there was a recognisable difference in the election narrative in Scotland. The rest of the country focused on the details outlined in the Beveridge report, published in December 1942. It resulted in those contesting by-elections across the rest of the UK from 1943 onwards aligning their policy aims with the report recommendations. Addison noted that the Common Wealth party, in particular, capitalised on the popularity of the Beveridge report, standing against Labour and Conservative candidates.<sup>117</sup> In Scotland the emphasis shifted towards specifically local and Scottish issues, such as the transfer of female labour from Scotland to England, and post-war planning. This was due to three out of the four contests from 1943 to 1945 featuring candidates who were pro-home rule.

Another marked difference was by-elections which were contested by a true independent candidate with no party affiliation or involvement with any kind of movement were rare in Scotland. England saw a spate of independent candidates which either ran the government close or defeated the candidate during the course of 1942.<sup>118</sup> The only exception in Scotland was Cathcart, but this election also featured candidates from minor parties. The brief conjecture where by-elections in Scotland conformed with the wider UK pattern between 1942 and 1943 changed with the final contests both being contested by SNP candidates. Given the nature of the party, the natural emphasis was predominately on Scottish issues, rather than focusing on the wider societal issues highlighted by the Common Wealth party

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1337-8 and symbolic issues around the banning of the kilt as Active dress in Battle, see House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series (*Hansard*) 23 January 1940 vol. 356 cols. 349-51.

<sup>116</sup> Calder, *Common Wealth Party*, part 2, pp. 83-91.

<sup>117</sup> Addison, *The Road to 1945*, p. 225.

<sup>118</sup> Addison, 'By-elections', pp. 131-2.

in English by-elections. This signalled to the government that the Scottish issues which were secondary to the anti-truce and anti-government statements in earlier by-elections were actually quite inflammatory, especially when placed before an electorate who were tired of the same political message which often did not appeal to Scottish sentiment. As has been displayed so far in these chapters, the continuation of party politics by minor parties created a contentious political atmosphere. The almost constant opposition to government candidates in Scottish by-elections had the potential to crystalize into a far more dangerous outcome for the government.

### **'Yours for Scotland'** <sup>119</sup>

The emphasis on purely Scottish issues would be the central feature of the Kirkcaldy Burghs by-election of February 1944. It was the first occasion since the split within the SNP to trial a new policy of contesting at elections until it achieved a majority of Scottish seats in Westminster.<sup>120</sup> It had earmarked the constituency as having potential as early as October 1943, when it was decided that it would help the party membership retain interest and would be a good platform to further the party's policy aims. This was despite the misgivings of the party secretary Dr Robert McIntyre, who thought running an election campaign in a constituency where it no longer had any organisation would be 'an amateurish effort'. He had also noted that the local Labour party were well organised.<sup>121</sup> Although he observed during the course of the discussion that elections were a traditional an expression of local community feeling. He thought the policy the party planned to fight the by-election on – the transfer of Scottish women to England – had not greatly affected the area and he was very

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<sup>119</sup> 'Yours for Scotland,' was the sign off used by many SNP members in their election communications and personal correspondence.

<sup>120</sup> NLS, Acc. 6419/44/4, Minutes of meeting of the SNP National Council, 6 November 1943.

<sup>121</sup> NLS Acc.6419/Box 44/4, minutes of meeting of the SNP National Council, 2 October 1943.

much against contesting.<sup>122</sup> The vacancy in Kirkcaldy had arisen due to the retirement of the previous Labour MP, Thomas Kennedy.<sup>123</sup> His resignation was expected for a while, as noted above, the SNP had begun planning its candidature since October 1943. Another independent candidate, Hendry Hilditch, declared his intention to stand long before the official Labour government candidate was even chosen. Hilditch stood as a Christian Socialist candidate declaring a threefold campaign agenda of aiming for a negotiated peace, of Labour cancelling the electoral truce, and an anti-government agenda.<sup>124</sup>

The official Labour and government candidate was still not confirmed, despite two opposing candidates already stating their intention to stand. This was due to several internal issues within the local Labour party. In November 1943 all candidates' nominations were declared void and there was a re-election called. Arthur Woodburn and assistant organiser RT Windle went to Kirkcaldy to investigate, as it was felt that the local Communist party had tried to infiltrate the election. It was also noted in the official report that the Labour candidate Tom Hubbard was not considered a strong contender and it was felt that he would be easy to defeat.<sup>125</sup> This situation greatly interfered with the planning and running of the campaign. Because of the delays, Labour's final selection conference was not until 23 January 1944, allowing the other two candidates more time to begin canvassing. The election was held on 17 February meaning the government candidate had three weeks of canvassing compared to three months for Douglas Young.

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> *The Sunday Post*, 23 January 1943.

<sup>124</sup> *Fife Free Press*, 12 February 1943.

<sup>125</sup> LPA, NEC Files 1943, Inquiry into the Kirkcaldy By-election, 24 November 1943.

After a slow start to the campaign because of the delay in the Labour nomination, the contest quickly became heated between the three candidates and was extensively covered in the local Fife press.<sup>126</sup> Unlike the national press which tended to focus heavily on the government candidate, the local Fife press accorded an equal amount of column inches to each candidate and allowed them to fully express their message to the electorate.<sup>127</sup> The government candidate's message was fairly standard. Indeed, Hubbard proclaimed himself both the Labour and National Government candidate, indicating the shift in priorities for the Labour party. Labour DLPs were coming under severe pressure by their leadership to maintain the truce.<sup>128</sup> Incidentally, the campaign for the notorious West Derbyshire by-election was ongoing at the same time as Kirkcaldy, hence the heavy emphasis by Hubbard on also being the government candidate.<sup>129</sup> The elections were due to be held on the same day. With his message focusing mostly on maintaining unity and supporting the government, Hubbard was ripe for attack by both his opponents over a lack of attention to other concerns. He was very defensive of Labour's decision to enter the coalition and he not only paid tribute to Churchill, but defended the Conservatives' pre-war policy.<sup>130</sup> The staunch defence of the coalition was a dangerous tactic for Hubbard. Both his opponents were able to use this as their arguments for either a lack of democracy in the electoral system, or as a reason why all 'London controlled parties' were not protecting Scottish interests.

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<sup>126</sup> Mostly in the *Fife Free Press*, *Leven Mail* and *Dundee Telegraph*.

<sup>127</sup> *Fife Free Press*, 12 February 1944.

<sup>128</sup> LPA, NEC Files, minutes of meeting of the elections sub-committee, 9 February 1944.

<sup>129</sup> This election saw the son of the Duke of Devonshire defeated in one of the safest Conservative seats by Charles White, Labour's prospective candidate, who broke the truce to stand as an 'Independent Labour' candidate. For more details, see G.H Bennett, 'The Wartime political truce and the hopes for post war coalition: The West Derbyshire By-Election 1944. *Midland History*, 17 (1992), pp. 118-135.

<sup>130</sup> *Fife Free Press*, 12 February 1944.

Hilditch was able to criticise Labour as being a junior partner in the government and were therefore unable to enact truly socialist policies. He asked the voters of Kirkcaldy to return him as a means to kick-start the demise of the electoral truce.<sup>131</sup> Perhaps if Hilditch had been the only opposition candidate, this type of plea would have gained more traction. However, he faced a more charismatic character in Douglas Young with his very targeted appeal. As Richard Finlay has noted, the SNP shifted its policy aims towards a more local perspective, giving a voice to the community which wartime controls had somewhat stifled.<sup>132</sup> This was a similar message to Hilditch's, in asking the voters to help him repeal the electoral truce. However, Young was able to illustrate this image of wartime control by highlighting the conscription of Scottish women for war work, and their subsequent transference to England owing to a lack of wartime industry located in Scotland. This was a policy which had directly affected some of the Kirkcaldy electors.<sup>133</sup> This appeal was far more personalised and had more of a connection with the electorate than the other two candidates' more standard messages. It seemed strike a chord as he received a letter of support from 11 'Bevin Girls' who has been transferred to the Midlands as part of the scheme. An extract of the letter was published in the *Glasgow Herald*:

We the undersigned Scottish girls directed to the English midlands by Ernest Bevin, send out strongest support to Douglas Young...we call upon all electors in Kirkcaldy Burghs to vote for Douglas Young for his championship of the Scottish people's rights and to register their protest against the shift south of Scottish industry and workers.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> *The Leven Mail*, 16 February 1944.

<sup>132</sup> Finlay, 'Robert McIntyre,' p. 188.

<sup>133</sup> Pentland, 'Douglas Young' p. 160.

<sup>134</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 15 February 1944.

His election campaign was, as Gordon Pentland has noted, a far more professionally run affair than previous SNP efforts which greatly aided his success.<sup>135</sup> His election address contained an even more direct Scottish programme. He made little mention of the war and focused his efforts on local and Scottish issues.<sup>136</sup> Young criticised his Labour opponent for barely mentioning Scotland in his election address and claimed it had probably been written for him by an English election agent. It allowed him to present himself as being the only candidate standing to truly represent Scotland. Because of Young's forceful personality and his campaign message being a little different from the norm, he did receive quite a lot of publicity and even the mainstream press could not avoid mentioning his campaign.<sup>137</sup> The day before polling, *The Scotsman* declared that Douglas Young had addressed some of the largest meetings of the campaign, but that the Labour candidate should expect to receive backing of local Unionists.<sup>138</sup> Yet, the *Glasgow Herald* reported there was general apathy towards the election with locals taking for granted that Labour would win. Some locals who were interviewed liked Douglas Young but felt that electing him would do little to change anything.<sup>139</sup>

When polling day arrived, Labour was still confident that it would be elected with a large majority. The SNP, while realistic about the prospect of winning, knew there was an outside chance that it may take the seat.<sup>140</sup> When the result was announced there was surprise expressed at the percentage vote share for the SNP candidate, Thomas Hubbard won for Labour with 8268 votes (52 per cent), Douglas Young achieved 6621 votes (41 per cent) and

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Douglas Young, *Kirkcaldy Burghs By-election: Douglas Young's demands for Scotland*, (Kirkcaldy, 1944).

<sup>137</sup> *The Scotsman*, 16 February 1941, *Daily Record*, 14 February 1941, and *Sunday Post*, 23 January 1941.

<sup>138</sup> *The Scotsman*, 16 February 1941.

<sup>139</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 15 February 1944.

<sup>140</sup> NLS Acc.6419, box 44/4, minutes of meeting of the SNP National Council and *The Scotsman*, 16 February 1944.

Hendry Hilditch 1136, (7 per cent). The shocking result received from West Derbyshire on the same day as Kirkcaldy rather overshadowed the election, however there was some press interest in the result. Local news outfit *The Fife Free Press* helpfully provided a summary of all the mentions of the Kirkcaldy result in the week after the election. The consensus which emerged from the coverage was the result signified a dissatisfaction towards the political status quo, with the truce and the make-up of the government leaving the electorate feeling disenfranchised. On majority, the reports attributed the close result to a protest vote and not a shift in sentiment towards Scottish nationalism.<sup>141</sup> The election left Labour with some concerns given that Kirkcaldy was a fairly safe seat for the party. The problems the party faced before the election with candidate selection and Communist infiltration issues caused it to start at a disadvantage. Then the party's inefficient organisation only allowing three weeks of campaigning against the two other candidates, who both started their campaigns far earlier, almost cost Labour an MP. As one commentator observed, if the votes for Hilditch and Young were added together then the two anti-government candidates were only 500 votes short of the Labour candidate's total.<sup>142</sup>

The result of Kirkcaldy was not the disaster that befell the government in West Derbyshire, however it showed that there were certainly problems in Scotland. With no other outlet to express their sense of frustration with the political status quo, some of the Kirkcaldy electorate chose to express their discontent through opposing the government candidate. As Addison has noted, by-elections could often be a light relief from grimmer affairs, almost a political version of a soap opera if the candidates had their comedic moments.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> *Fife Free Press*, 26 February 1944.

<sup>142</sup> *The Scotsman*, 19 February 1944.

<sup>143</sup> Addison, 'By-elections', p. 144.

However, as much as the government candidate in the election may have wished to focus on national unity, winning the war or the reversal of the electoral truce, the narrative from Young regarding Scotland's needs was the prominent feature of the election. It indicated the divergence in Scotland from the political sentiment of the rest of the UK during a period where the concerns were mostly against Conservatism. In Scotland, the mood was distrustful of all the major parties, which the SNP in particular classified as 'London controlled.'<sup>144</sup> Since the SNP was the only political party contesting against the government, this sentiment was more commonly heard by the public through the campaign messages. The fact that Thomas Johnston was vocal in his concern regarding the increase of the Nationalists' activities awarded its influence a level of gravitas that was disproportionate to the actual threat.<sup>145</sup>

Kirkcaldy was an important turning point for the SNP. The party had learned how to conduct an effective campaign by sticking to one main message as it finally had clarity on what it stood for. By focusing on local issues, it was able to claim that it was standing up for Scotland. This was something which the main parties were less able to emphasise due to the requirements of the coalition and the electoral truce. The SNP was able to place itself firmly against the political status quo and argue for change on similar lines to the independent and Common Wealth candidates in the rest of the UK; but the all-important difference was the Scottish perspective. The sense of discontentment capitalised on during the campaign would have no further electoral outlet until the final year of the war. Once

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<sup>144</sup> Douglas Young, *Election address*.

<sup>145</sup> Harvie, 'Labour and the Scottish Government', pp. 14-15.

again, the exploitation of local and Scottish grievances would be a policy pursued by the SNP.

### **The Motherwell Miracle**

The Motherwell by-election of April 1945 is one of those few Scottish by-elections which has been mentioned within the historiography, due to the fact that the SNP candidate actually managed to defeat his Labour opponent. Addison, Calder, Cameron, Finlay and Harvie have all mentioned this election in their work as being a moment where Scotland displayed discontent towards the government.<sup>146</sup> There were several Scottish projects under consideration by the government in the first quarter of 1945: Prestwick airport was being considered as the location for the UK's transatlantic flight terminal, and it was proposed that road bridges would be built across the Forth and Tay. When discussion over these matters resulted in the negative, the reaction across the Scottish press was uproarious. The *Edinburgh Evening News* commissioned a survey by the polling service Gallup, and found that 79 per cent of those surveyed from the Edinburgh region stated that they supported the building of a Forth Road Bridge.<sup>147</sup> The letter columns of the East of Scotland press contained indignant letters from members of the public expressing their anger and concern over the decision against building a Forth Bridge.<sup>148</sup> There was a similar reaction in the *Glasgow Herald* to the Prestwick decision. Although the Gallup poll did not ask a question on the subject in their survey, there were still strong feelings being expressed by readers

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<sup>146</sup> Addison, 'By-elections', p. 131 and Calder, *The People's War*, p. 574, Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, p. 192, Finlay, *Independent and Free*, pp. 241-2, and Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland', p. 936.

<sup>147</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 18 January 1945.

<sup>148</sup> *The Scotsman*, *The Edinburgh Evening News* and *the Dundee Courier and Advertiser* from January-February 1945.

over the decision. The most insightful outcome of the Gallup poll was the question which was asked on the subject of a separate Scottish parliament:

“What do you think should be the governmental relations between Scotland and the rest of Britain?

Option A: Leave as things as they are?

Option B: A Scottish parliament to deal with exclusively Scottish affairs?

Option C: Complete separation as in the case of Eire?”<sup>149</sup>

The response for each option was A:39 per cent B:53 per cent and C:8 per cent. This indicated that there was a majority of support from the respondents for some form of change in the constitutional arrangements of Scotland. These underlying feelings of frustration in Scotland were unable to achieve any outlet, until the Motherwell by-election enabled an opportunity for release.

The by-election vacancy arose due to the tragic death of the previous MP in a road traffic accident in January 1945.<sup>150</sup> The Labour party was keen to hold the by-election as soon as possible due to the fact that the electoral register was finally being updated. If it waited too long, a special register for the election would need to be implemented. Labour was also aware that the SNP was keen to contest the election.<sup>151</sup> The party had cause to be concerned about the by-election as Motherwell was classified as being politically volatile; it was the type of constituency Labour would need to ensure it won if it wished for a general election victory. In the two general elections of the 1930s, the votes between Labour and

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<sup>149</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News* 15 January 1945.

<sup>150</sup> *Dundee Courier and Advertiser*, 6 January 1945.

<sup>151</sup> LPA, NEC Files, minutes of meeting of the elections sub-committee, 24 January 1945.

the Unionists were extremely close. The Unionists triumphed in 1931 with 15513 to Labour's 14325 leaving a slim majority of 799. In 1935 the seat had changed hands with Labour winning 14755 votes to the Unionists 14325, with an even smaller majority of 430.<sup>152</sup> With the truce in place and no Unionist candidate contesting, initially it appeared Labour would have a straightforward fight. Yet, Labour could not guarantee at this late stage of the war that Unionist voters would continue to follow the consensus and vote for the Labour candidate. The SNP wisely chose party secretary, the very respectable Dr Robert McIntyre as its candidate. He had offered outspoken criticism of Labour's centralisation plans and was likely to appeal to Liberal and Unionist voters who were reluctant to follow the demands of electoral truce.<sup>153</sup> The Labour candidate, Alex Anderson, did not aid his campaign by fighting openly under the banner of the Labour party; there was no mention anywhere on his election literature that he was the National Government candidate.<sup>154</sup> Anderson was also scuppered by a member of his own party when Ernest Bevin made a speech on 7 April stating that the coalition had exceeded its usefulness.<sup>155</sup> Bevin's speech was unlikely to solicit support from already reluctant Unionists. The local press commented on this fact in the run up to the election with the *Motherwell Times* remarking that any support from local Unionists or Liberals was 'conspicuous by their absence on the platform.'<sup>156</sup> There was a comment made by a member of the local Unionist party which outlined the difficulties Labour may have in convincing Unionists to back the candidate who still technically represented the coalition.

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<sup>152</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 634.

<sup>153</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 242.

<sup>154</sup> Alex Anderson, *Motherwell and Wishaw Division Parliamentary Bye-Election address*, (Glasgow, 1945).

<sup>155</sup> *The Scotsman*, 8 April 1945.

<sup>156</sup> *Motherwell Times*, 6 April 1945.

'I do not see why I should vote socialist and give that party a fictitious picture of their importance...they have declared they wish to stand on their own in the next general election.'<sup>157</sup>

*The Scotsman* indicated it was likely that most Unionists would abstain and, overall, it was deemed that the vote was likely to be very close indeed.<sup>158</sup>

The Labour candidate was also extremely unfortunate to have the decision over Prestwick and the Forth Bridge looming large over his campaign. Some politicians could see the danger the fallout from the decision would cause at the Motherwell by-election. Lord Mansfield displayed excellent foresight declaring, 'should the government's reply be entirely unsatisfactory the nationalist candidate would carry the votes of a considerable proportion irrespective of party.'<sup>159</sup> Many heavyweight figures waded into the contest in support of Anderson. Thomas Johnston wrote an open letter which was printed in the press to offer his support declaring, 'a premature dissolution [of the truce] would play into Hitler's game.'<sup>160</sup> Anderson was further disadvantaged by the fact that the SNP actually ran a well organised campaign with a large force of activists, unlike campaigns in the early years of the war which were a little more chaotic.<sup>161</sup> The party also focused more heavily on local issues such the lack of attention paid to Scotland's needs for the duration of the war, and the decisions over the Forth Bridge and Prestwick were key facts highlighted by McIntyre in his election literature. Indeed, he stated in bold lettering on his election leaflet 'the London controlled Labour party,' ensuring that the electorate were aware that Labour did not have the

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<sup>157</sup> *The Scotsman*, 7 April 1945.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> *Fife Free Press & Kirkcaldy Guardian*, 31 March 1945.

<sup>160</sup> *Wishaw Press*, 6 April 1945.

<sup>161</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 242.

credentials to truly speak for Scotland. Thus establishing the legitimacy that only the SNP was qualified to do so.<sup>162</sup> McIntyre was also one of the most credible candidates the SNP had placed forward for election, he had the respectability as a medical doctor who presented his viewpoints in a quiet, measured way. This personality somewhat softened the radical message from the SNP and was able to present it to the electorate in a way which was not alarming or off-putting. Compared to Douglas Young's forthright methods in Kirkcaldy, McIntyre's temperament was able to engage a broader appeal base.<sup>163</sup>

Labour faced an attack on several fronts with Motherwell; not only was it being criticised on its own inability to amend the recently unpopular decisions made which related to Scotland, but the party was unable to combat McIntyre's carefully targeted appeal to localism. As a far more centralised party, Labour was unable to tailor its campaign in that direction.<sup>164</sup> The party had suffered from organisational problems for the duration of the war. Harvie notes that the party was far more focused on the general election and rather lost sight of the need to campaign in Motherwell.<sup>165</sup> Even Labour's NEC sub-committee concurred with this opinion, writing to its Scottish Secretary demanding to know why more organisational effort was not placed on the by-election campaign.<sup>166</sup>

All these factors combined in the negative for Labour, Alex Anderson was defeated by 11417 votes to 10800 with turnout at 54 per cent, the highest turnout for a wartime by-election in Scotland.<sup>167</sup> As was mentioned above and in chapter two of this thesis, the press were quick

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<sup>162</sup> Dr Robert McIntyre, *To the Electors of Motherwell and Wishaw from Dr Robert McIntyre*, (Glasgow, 1945).

<sup>163</sup> Finlay, *Independent and Free*, p. 242.

<sup>164</sup> Richard Finlay, 'Robert McIntyre,' in James Mitchell & Gerry Hassan (eds) *Scottish National Party Leaders* (London, 2016) pp. 177-198, at p. 188.

<sup>165</sup> Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland', p. 944.

<sup>166</sup> LPA, NEC Files, minutes of meeting of the organisational sub-committee, 18 April 1945.

<sup>167</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 634.

to comment on the result and offer their own analysis on the matter. The view that emerged across countless opinion pieces in the national and local Scottish press was that Motherwell was a protest vote rather than a genuine expression for the true aims of the SNP candidate. This by-election the first to be undertaken in Scotland on an updated electoral register. It was also the first by-election since the controversies over Scottish post-war planning, which had effectively allowed a disenfranchised electorate the chance to express their opinion. The fact that a mere two months later in the July general election the outcome was the reverse with the Labour candidate gaining 53% to McIntyre's 27% suggested that there was some element of protest voting occurring in the April election. The fact that a general election was approaching could also have influenced the result, since the electorate would be aware that the result did not matter as much as usual.

Motherwell is one of those by-elections that has received cursory mentions in the literature of British politics during the Second World War.<sup>168</sup> Yet, it has often been in the guise of suggesting that Scotland had experienced some political volatility during the war to allow the election of an SNP candidate to occur, but not enough to encourage a deep investigation of the fact. Now that a sample of the most noteworthy by-elections held in Scotland during the Second World War have been analysed, the reasons why Motherwell happened is finally able to be placed in proper context. The result in Motherwell was gradually built towards through minor party candidates campaigning on anti-government agendas in by-elections from 1941. The minor parties were a continual presence in the political landscape, and indicated the strength of party politics in Scotland for the entirety of the war. The

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<sup>168</sup> Addison, 'By-elections', p. 131, Calder, *The People's War*, p. 574, Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, p. 192, Finlay, *Independent and Free*, pp. 241-2, and Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland', p. 936.

importance of minor party politics in Scotland has been demonstrated over the course of these chapters as a reason why Scotland's political engagement was a little different to the rest of the UK, and especially to England. Instead of the independent candidates who came forward in England to contest by-elections for a variety of reason, in Scotland the minor parties' complaints tended to share similar themes. Mainly they were criticisms of the coalition government and their policies, and objections regarding governmental decisions which negatively impacted Scotland.

There was also the psychological mentality within these fringe parties to consider, particularly the SNP which objected to the idea of a peripheral nation being heavily governed from a central location. It was a conscious strategy on the SNP's part, using that grievance to exploit underlining feelings of neglect, especially after the decisions made by the government in early 1945. As noted earlier in this chapter, surveys carried out by Mass Observation indicated that there were some difficulties experienced by Scots relating to the national unity narratives. This was most apparent when the sufferings experienced in England were heavily emphasised in the press and in government propaganda. Mass Observation observed a general lack of leadership in Scotland before Thomas Johnston became Secretary of State, noting that Churchill was not well-regarded, especially in the Glasgow region.<sup>169</sup> The previous chapters have considered the electoral truce and the problems it caused for ordinary democratic political engagement in by-elections. This problem with democratic engagement increased further once the coalition government was formed. At the 1941 Dunbartonshire by-election, the first in Scotland after the coalition formed, the Communists saw the opportunity to discredit Labour for its part in the coalition

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<sup>169</sup> MO Report on Morale in Glasgow, pp. 2-4

in the hope of winning over supporters. This saw the beginning of an anti-coalition government sentiment in Scotland, because the minor parties were less concerned with anti-Conservatism. Instead, they targeted the coalition as the object of their grievances. This then continued to the four-way contest in Cathcart with each candidate extolling their grievances towards the government, the Common Wealth candidate almost triumphing in North Midlothian, Douglas Young's twin appeals to Scottish and anti-government sentiment in Kirkcaldy was realised to be a winning combination which finally triumphed in Motherwell.

### **The Shifting Sands of Scottish Sentiment**

These chapters have analysed the similarities and differences between Scotland and the rest of the UK's electoral politics and drawn some interesting conclusions. There is always a danger in drawing narrow conclusions from by-election results, as they are microcosms of activity in the wider political sphere. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that under wartime circumstances there were far fewer ways for any form of political engagement to occur, much less the ability to measure what conclusions could be drawn when any political activity did transpire. The Mass Observation and MOI Home Intelligence reports did not often cover Scotland; they usually did only when there was a noteworthy occurrence like a by-election. Therefore, it is important to analyse what happened when the opportunity arose for sections of the electorate to show their feelings towards the government by either supporting or rejected their pleas for unity. During the later years of the war, appeals from the government for Scotland to display their unity behind the war were increasingly being ignored. These chapters have demonstrated the merit of investigating the events of by-elections in Scotland to help reconstruct political engagement across the spectrum. The

differences outlined in the Scottish experience in this and the previous chapter have emphasised that by conducting a study at a local Scottish level, it helps to add detail and context to the national narrative.

The deeper examination of the first contested by-election at Clackmannan gave an insight into the difficulties the pacifist movement had in establishing their electability in Scotland. The examination of the first break in the electoral truce highlighted that relations between Scottish divisional branches of the Labour party and the central management were fraught. This was caused by its perceptions that major decisions were made centrally with no consultation. Furthermore, this chapter has revealed that Scotland did not experience that swing towards Socialist/Liberal ideas in the same manner as the rest of the UK, because those appeals had a specifically Scottish focus. The activities of Thomas Johnston in the Scottish Office aided to a sense of Scotland's domestic affairs, both during and post-war, as being somewhat separate from the UK. His plaudits and self-publicised achievements for Scotland may have given the perception that Scotland was engulfed in its own political bubble. The UK government was too preoccupied with the war to pay attention to Scottish affairs.<sup>170</sup>

When reflecting on the most successful by-elections challenges in Scotland there was a commonality shared by those candidates; their message was either very much Scotland-centric or questioned whether there was a psychological democratic deficit in Scotland. For example, the Argyll by-election where William Power managed a strong result due to his argument that the electoral truce – an agreement made outside of Scotland – was disenfranchising to the populace of Argyll. To a community which had recently been

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<sup>170</sup> Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland,' p. 931. Graham S. Walker, *Thomas Johnston* (Manchester 1988).

adversely affected by the government's policy on the protected areas, it was a means to register their irritation and dislike of such a policy. In Kirkcaldy it was Douglas Young's targeted campaign on exclusively local issues which he declared were ignored by the Labour member due to the need to focus on the war. This, once again, attracted those voters who were discontented with government policy. The SNP used the same tactic in Motherwell to even greater effect aided by the recent unpopular government decisions before the election. When tracing the development of these results a pattern becomes apparent – in order to do well in a Scottish by-election during the war, one needed to focus one's appeal on placing Scotland and its democratic traditions at the forefront of the campaign. It was therefore unsurprising that McIntyre managed to triumph at the last gasp. A sense of discontentment regarding the implementation of government decisions in Scotland has been the central theme throughout these two chapters. When closely examined, Motherwell is the culmination of these problems and not just an incongruous reaction to the decisions made in early 1945.

By-elections during the war indicate what happens when an electoral system is challenged by extraordinary circumstances. They also demonstrate that the public's patience with interference to the democratic process could only be pushed so far. It has been shown in this chapter that, particularly after 1942, the government found it very difficult to convince the populace that the electoral circumstances caused by the truce needed to be maintained – regardless of the impediment it placed upon electoral politics. This was more apparent in Scotland which, as has been mentioned, had a less stable political environment with minor parties retaining more support and a sense that some political decisions were being imposed on Scotland. The Scottish branches of the main parties were accustomed to more autonomous decision making than most UK regional party branches. The need to adhere to

centralised policy meant that the stagnation caused by the truce was more keenly felt. The number of contested by-elections which happened for the duration of the war reinforced the problems the truce caused, especially when the non-government candidates were continually chastised by a very pro-government media. Eventually the repeated message of unity and the dangers of voting against the government became another tiresome refrain which the heavily regulated populace began to ignore. This reaction which Scotland had towards a centralised message attempting to impose a uniformity across the whole of Britain would be highlighted most significantly in the 1945 general election, where once again Scotland differed from the rest of the UK's political patterns.

**Chapter Five – A Curious Caledonian Contest: The 1945 General Election in Scotland.**

**Figure 6**



*Let us do our utmost to have party battles and factions reduced to their smallest compass. Let us advance as people of this great island, in which Scotland plays so prominent and noble a part, united not only in winning*

*victories in the carnage of war, but securing their permanency and continuance during the period of less burdensome days of peace.<sup>1</sup>*

When Winston Churchill's address was uproariously received by the ecstatic Glasgow crowd on 28 June 1945, he might have been justified in believing his future as Prime Minister was secure. After all, his eve of the poll tour in Scotland had been a great success, with huge turnouts at his public meetings and expressions of gratitude for his war leadership. Yet as Churchill would discover, the unpredictable nature of wartime politics which has been discussed in the previous four chapters would result in a final tumultuous act.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Scotsman*, 29 June 1945.

The general election of 1945 has become a mythologised event, portrayed in the years since as the people's election to end the people's war. Then historians such as Paul Addison, Stephen Fielding and Henry Pelling began to look again at the events which were rather taken for granted. The vast amount of literature which has emerged since the 1990s on the subject leads to a rather complicated picture, with revisions and counter-revisions all attempting to reconstruct the events of 1945. However, in terms of regional or local studies there are far fewer examples, especially for Scotland. Other than Christopher Harvie's study of the Labour party in Scotland, an overview of events in articles and book chapters by Ewen Cameron, Catriona McDonald and James Kellas, a more detailed study on the nature of the general election in Scotland is sorely missing.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the emphasise placed here on the Scottish experience has a distinctive purpose. It is not a superfluous perspective to be added to our current understanding of events. On the contrary, there are several anomalies in the Scottish results which markedly differ from wider British trends, thus requiring a more detailed examination. The reasons for the smaller swing to Labour in Scotland in comparison with the rest of the UK will be explored, as will the reasons why the Unionists' support held up better than anticipated. The eclipse of the Scottish Liberals and the electoral fortunes of the minor parties which have been discussed throughout the thesis so far will also be examined.

In this chapter the 1945 election will be analysed from a Scottish perspective. Any discussion, planning and policy in a wider British context are included only to tease out any differences as regards to Scotland. This chapter will not feature a re-telling of well-established facts and arguments around the nature of the general election of 1945. In many

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<sup>2</sup> Arnott and MacDonald, 'The Union' pp. 43-61. Cameron, *Impaled upon a Thistle*, pp. 193-97. Kellas, 'The Party in Scotland', pp. 671-96.

ways the general election is the final piece of the jigsaw which completes the picture of wartime politics in Scotland. The previous four chapters have been intricately linked in their approach to examining the truce. They have established the restrictions which the truce placed on wartime politics and the experience of electoral politics under those new conditions. However, only examining by-elections cannot show the full extent of the way local parties managed political organisation and engagement, nor can it fully replicate normal electoral politics. That is why examining the general election of 1945 is essential to consider the shadow the electoral truce would cast on normal peacetime politics. Local parties were suddenly free from the shackles of the truce and attempted to resume activity. It is important to consider how this was managed by parties. It will be noted throughout this chapter that the restrictive nature of the truce left an indelible impression on parties which was difficult to remove. Even after its demise, the truce was used as a convenient scapegoat to explain issues such as declining membership which had been endemic issues before the outbreak of war.

There will be a strong focus on organisational planning for the election over the course of this chapter for two reasons: Firstly, these details are not well covered for all the parties in Scotland in the current literature and the way campaigns were managed would have a bearing on the results.<sup>3</sup> Second, the way the parties had interpreted the electoral truce had harmed the way in which their general election campaigns were run. The occasional wartime by-election did not allow political parties to fully exercise their organisational abilities with most in a semi-operational state. Analysis of this crucial area of activity will

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<sup>3</sup> The associated literature for this subject was covered in the Introduction on pp. 25-7.

offer an insight into state of Scottish political parties as they resumed peace-time electoral operations.

### **Organisational Planning – Unionists, Labour and Liberals.**

The general election of 1945 was the first time in a decade that the electorate would be called upon, en-masse, to exercise their right to vote. Despite the twelve contested by-elections which had been held during the war, all the political parties' organisational machinery was in need of some modernisation. While most of the planning for the general election increased after D-Day in the summer of 1944, there was consideration from the political parties about the possibility of an immediate post-war election from around 1941. The Unionists did display some foresight at an emergency meeting held at the outbreak of war. The Eastern divisional Council of the SCUA remarked:

There was no doubt that immediately on the conclusion of the war there would be a general election and it would be most unfortunate if in such circumstances the Unionist association should not be ready to function.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the organisational issues the party claimed in the aftermath of the war, at this early stage some Unionist committee members could discern the future implications all too clearly. Despite CCO's restrictive interpretation of the truce, the Unionists had been determined to maintain its organisation for the sake of the party, and also as demonstrated in the quotation above, to be ready for whatever electoral challenges lay ahead.

Each annual report of the SCUA from 1941 to 1944 increased the emphasis on the need to maintain the Unionist organisations for the aftermath of the war. Historians such as Pelling

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<sup>4</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/44, minutes of an emergency meeting of the SCUA Eastern Divisional Council, 13 September 1939.

and Thorpe observed that the Conservative party was quick to place the blame on the truce and its loss of personnel to the war.<sup>5</sup> The evidence from the Scottish Unionist archives suggests that this was not merely an exaggeration or an excuse. Many constituency parties lost personnel and relinquished meeting spaces to aid the war effort. Yet in Scotland, recovery planning had been considered many months before CCO finally began to think about the forthcoming election.

The Eastern Divisional Council began to rebuild its constituency parties as early as January 1944, with the secretary and organising agent planning a tour of the organisations over the spring to assess their readiness. Council members were encouraged to place all their energies into helping the constituencies recover.<sup>6</sup> The Western Divisional Council undertook similar work over the course of 1944 and reported on its findings in September. Although disappointed with the overall condition of the party machinery, it was not as bad as was feared. The Glasgow Unionist association were surprised to find that all fifteen of its constituency parties were still operating 'a nucleus organisation capable of quickly expanding its functioning in each division'.<sup>7</sup> It also noted that memberships had been well maintained and interest kept up by a variety of wartime activities. As Thorpe noted, the Conservatives and Unionists' interpretation of the truce may have curtailed political activity, but the social activities which were maintained nationwide during the war years aided its recovery in advance of the election.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Pelling, 'The 1945 General Election', p. 410 and Thorpe, *Parties at War*, pp. 283-4.

<sup>6</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/44, minutes of meeting of the Eastern Divisional Council, 14 January 1944.

<sup>7</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/74, minutes of the annual general meeting of the Glasgow Unionist Association, 23 February 1945.

<sup>8</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 187.

One area where the SCUA did struggle was having the required number of election agents, especially as it held the ambitious aim of having one in every constituency.<sup>9</sup> The government had agreed that only those who had served as election agents before the war would be released from military service.<sup>10</sup> The hopes of the Unionists to recruit young and able agents to fill the ranks were unfulfilled. The party tried to gain a head start during the summer of 1944 by training suitable agents from invalided members of the forces, but still knew it would be short of overall requirements.<sup>11</sup> The Unionists also attempted to recruit organising agents through newspaper adverts in July 1944, but were unsuccessful in finding its preferred candidates.<sup>12</sup> Thorpe noted that associations across Britain struggled to recruit suitable agents because of the rigorous standards the party had always imposed.<sup>13</sup> Even in desperate times, the Unionists would not compromise on its expectations for suitable agents, preferring to await the release of former agents who could be trusted to perform the role properly. Yet the Unionists was always ahead of the other parties in Scotland when it came to the full-time employment of election agents, Labour only had three full-time agents. Irrespective of the numbers of Unionist personnel who were called up during the war, it still managed to maintain nine full-time agents throughout compared to those three Labour agents.<sup>14</sup> The Unionists was generally a much better funded party in Scotland than Labour, so had a distinct advantage to begin with. The Labour party had tried to improve its system for educating and training agents throughout the 1930s, but it was far behind the professionalism of the Conservative agents.<sup>15</sup> There was evidence of Labour struggling for

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<sup>9</sup> In Scotland election agents were often called Organising Secretaries.

<sup>10</sup> CPA, SUMC 2/3, SUMC minutes of meeting, 20 February 1945.

<sup>11</sup> CPA, NUA 4/1/6, minutes of the executive committee, 27 July 1944.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 14 July 1944.

<sup>13</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 92.

<sup>14</sup> Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland', p. 928, and Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 98.

<sup>15</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 106.

suitable personnel in April 1945 with both the Ayrshire and Dumbarton DLPs advertising in *Forward* for organising agents.<sup>16</sup>

At a national level, the Conservatives drew up a document in the summer of 1944 which noted a few issues ahead of an election campaign. It was acutely aware that it had no recognisably 'Conservative' policy as all policy statements were issued by the coalition government. Furthermore, Churchill had been reluctant to speak on party-political matters.<sup>17</sup> As Ramsden has observed, the tension between the party organisation and Churchill was severe; he was unwilling to sacrifice the coalition and winning the war for the sake of the Conservative party.<sup>18</sup> In September 1944, the party's chairman, Major Dugdale, intimated that he would contact all constituency party chairs and encourage the resumption of political meetings.<sup>19</sup> Outwardly the truce was still maintained, but a distinct change in CCO's policy towards party activity was underway. As Thorpe noted, a sense of urgency overtook CCO during September 1944 when the likelihood of victory and the prospect of a general election by the end of the year panicked it into action. However, as progress with the war slowed, so did the urgency in the CCO's organisational efforts.<sup>20</sup> When the new Conservative party chairman Ralph Assheton replaced Major Dugdale, he openly admitted in November 1944 that there was still no party policy for the election and that he would do all that he could to secure one at the earliest opportunity.<sup>21</sup> This bizarre situation was the result of the truce being used as a political tool in order to limit party activity and gain the moral high ground against other political parties. With this evidence of the lax approach to

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<sup>16</sup> *Forward*, 7 April 1945.

<sup>17</sup> CPA, CCO/4/2/46, election procedure and machinery, general plan, 14 July 1944.

<sup>18</sup> Ramsden, 'Churchill as Leader,' p. 106.

<sup>19</sup> CPA, CCO, 4/4/142, party truce file, memorandum from Thomas Dugdale to Sir Richard Wells, 14 September 1944.

<sup>20</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>21</sup> CPA, NUA 4/1/6, minutes of NUCUA executive committee, 8 November 1944.

election planning by CCO, the advance preparations carried out by the SCUA indicated it had more foresight and gained a head start beyond the CCO's expectations. When examining the SCUA minutes, one gains the sense that the organisational effort was coming from within, as little meaningful direction was offered from the CCO. As Ramsden remarked, Churchill was too concerned with the war to pay much attention to election plans.<sup>22</sup> It was also important to note that when comparing its readiness for 1945 with previous elections, the Unionists would be justified in feeling less prepared than normal. The diminution of the Conservative Research Office was a problem as it was not able to accurately forecast potential successes.<sup>23</sup>

As Thorpe noted, the Unionists' heavy emphasis after the election on its organisational problems had been so widespread that it became an accepted fact.<sup>24</sup> Yet, there is evidence to suggest that it was Scottish Labour who experienced the real issues and it was surprising that it managed to do so well under the circumstances. When considering the Scottish Labour party's preparations several important points need to be considered, the first being that the organisational structure of the party was still in recovery from the ILP disaffiliation in 1932. Christopher Harvie has previously discussed this in his work, but it is a point which needs to be placed in context. Most importantly, the ILP had been the main force of the Labour movement in Scotland. The disaffiliation required Scottish Labour to enact a complete re-organisation, overhaul its electoral machinery and reconsider the nature of the Labour movement.<sup>25</sup> It became more embedded in the overall hierarchy of the Labour party as previously the ILP held the reins of power. After disaffiliation, CLPs were set up which

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<sup>22</sup> Ramsden, 'Churchill as Leader,' p. 105.

<sup>23</sup> See John Ramsden, *The Making of Conservative Party Policy: The Conservative Research Department since 1929* (London, 1980).

<sup>24</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, pp. 283-5.

<sup>25</sup> Knox and MacKinlay, 'The re-making of Scottish Labour', p. 188.

contained a larger group of members and were often poorly organised compared to CLPs in the rest of the UK. In 1939, Scottish Labour party membership was 29000 with the average constituency membership being 423, almost half the English average of 754.<sup>26</sup> There was not a DLP in around a tenth of Scotland's 70 constituencies, even worse, more than half of those which did have a DLP affiliated on the bare minimum membership requirement.<sup>27</sup> One of the main problems was the Scottish Executive had very little power to manage its own organisation or policy matters as the TUC and NEC maintained a tight managerial grip over party affairs. The Scottish Council of the Labour Party had little real authority and mostly acted on an advisory basis. It meant that, unless the NEC maintained interest in Scottish affairs, the SCLP was left to its own devices, yet unable to enact any real changes. As Knox and MacKinlay's analysis has concluded, Labour in Scotland during the 1930s was weak at grassroots level and within the Scottish Executive.<sup>28</sup>

These problems continued during the war as the party suffered major personnel problems. After Arthur Woodburn's departure as Scottish Secretary of the Labour Party, the post was filled by John Taylor who suffered with health issues and chronic understaffing of his department.<sup>29</sup> The whole Scottish organisation of the Labour party was very poor in the run up to the general election. Taylor's health recovered in 1944, allowing him to return to his position, but to assist him, an additional constituency organiser was employed for the election period.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the Labour Party in Scotland had entered the war with a weak

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 175

<sup>27</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 132.

<sup>28</sup> Knox and McKinlay, *The re-making of Scottish Labour* pp. 174-93.

<sup>29</sup> Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland', p. 928.

<sup>30</sup> LPA, NEC Files 1944, minutes of meeting of the organisation sub-committee, 18 October 1944.

organisation which was still fairly new. Subsequent wartime conditions then impacted upon the party's readiness to fight an election.

At a national level, Labour began preparations for the future general election in early 1944 by outlining its aim to have an organisation in every constituency, no matter how hopeless the prospects were in some areas.<sup>31</sup> However, evidence from several Scottish local branches indicated that CLPs began election planning at a slow pace during the latter half of 1944.

The Roxburgh and Selkirk CLP discussed forming a propaganda committee in the summer of 1944, but apart from that, little other meaningful planning took place.<sup>32</sup> The Merchiston Ward in Edinburgh was only re-formed in April 1944, but meetings were fairly sporadic with little energy expended upon campaign planning. It did not consider forming a propaganda committee until February 1945.<sup>33</sup> There were no further meetings held after this date, so in all likelihood the committee was never formed. Harvie noted that the Midlothian CLP, which had also been dormant until late 1944, was only reformed due to Kitty Wintringham being nominated as a Common Wealth candidate in the constituency.<sup>34</sup> Given that her husband, Tom Wintringham, had almost won the seat for the party at a by-election in 1943, the local Labour party was forced back into action.

Harvie discovered that by February 1945 around 33% of Scottish constituencies were still without a prospective candidate.<sup>35</sup> From his analysis and the available evidence from the NEC records, most local parties seemed to organise matters themselves with varying levels of success. Without the guidance and support of Transport House, there were some

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<sup>31</sup> LPA, NEC Files 1944, minutes of meeting of the elections sub-committee 9 February 1944.

<sup>32</sup> NLS, Acc. 4145/1, AGM of the Roxburgh and Selkirk branch of the Labour party, n.d.

<sup>33</sup> NLS, Dep.203, Merchiston ward Labour party, minutes of meeting, 27 April 1944.

<sup>34</sup> Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland', p. 936.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 935.

questionable nominations and decisions taken. An example of this indecisiveness was displayed by the Hawick Labour Party in the Scottish Borders, a fairly active branch by wartime standards. After much debate and indecision, it only decided on a prospective candidate in May 1945. Moreover, the prospective candidate was not a local party member but resided in Glasgow.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the Glasgow Burgh Labour Party had experienced ongoing problems during the war, from refusing to action an NEC directive on reforming the party – resulting in it being disaffiliated in 1941 – to the several Labour councillors being charged with corruption offences.<sup>37</sup> These issues displayed a lack of centralised control over matters in the Scottish party which should have been of a greater concern but, unlike the Unionists, Labour did not have the personnel or the ability to manage the situation. From the available evidence, it appeared that the Scottish branches of the Labour party did not stir themselves to plan effectively for the election. This stands in direct contrast to the careful and thorough planning of the NEC highlighted by several historians.<sup>38</sup> This lack of central support may also explain the poor state of the Scottish organisation. However, as mentioned earlier, the precarious state of the Scottish Labour machinery pre-war was a handicap to rectifying the situation.

Labour was not the only party in Scotland to suffer from organisational difficulties. The Liberals had suffered especially badly over the course of the war as a result of the electoral truce and the shutdown of most of its constituency organisations. The lack of branches which were officially affiliated and the pre-war loss of associations to the Liberal Nationals did not aid its wartime operations.<sup>39</sup> However, as Thorpe noted, its coalition partners had

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<sup>36</sup> NLS, Acc.4145/5, minutes of meeting of the executive of the Hawick Labour Party, 6 May 1945.

<sup>37</sup> LPA, NEC files 1942, memorandum to the National Agent from John Taylor on the present position of the Labour movement in Glasgow, 28 January 1942.

<sup>38</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, pp. 210-220. Brooke, *Labour's War*, pp. 321-7.

<sup>39</sup> Thorpe, p. 221.

suffered similar problems, but still managed to rally constituencies into action during 1945. He believed one of the main problems was excuses by older party members such as lack of time and finances.<sup>40</sup> Yet, he observed that some constituencies had pioneers which helped to offset the decline. One notable example was Lady Glen-Coates, the President of the SLF. During the latter half of the war she embarked upon a one-woman mission to ensure the Scottish Liberals did not disappear. She tried one final time in 1944 to badger constituency organisations to meet regularly, nominate candidates and attempt to raise funds ahead of the election.<sup>41</sup> Once again, her efforts had little effect on the moribund organisations. As Thorpe succinctly stated, 'parties of pioneers do not win power'.<sup>42</sup> The party was also determined not to be lured into another coupon election as it had at the end of the First World War. The Liberals experienced a momentary uplift in 1944 when Sir William Beveridge joined the party and was subsequently elected as the MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed at a by-election in October 1944. Although he technically represented an English constituency, the close proximity of Berwick to Scotland meant he became an active member of the Scottish Liberal Federation.

In the Summer of 1944, anxious at its upcoming election prospects, the Liberals sought a meeting with the Liberal Nationals (LN) to see if an agreement could be reached to re-unify the party. The question arose through numerous contacts that the industrious Lady Glen-Coates had made during her constituency tours across Scotland, resulting in an informal meeting to discuss the potential reunion.<sup>43</sup> The meeting was not successful, mainly as the Liberals failed to concede anything to the LNs. The Liberals expected LN MPs and candidates

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> NLS, Acc.11756/14, minutes of the executive of the SLF, 6 February 1944.

<sup>42</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, pp. 238-40.

<sup>43</sup> NLS, Acc.11765/14, minutes of meeting of the executive of the SLF, 28 June 1944.

to abandon their party principles, accept Liberal policy and no longer have Ernest Brown as leader. The Liberals conceded that the LNs were in a difficult position, yet would move its ideas no further to assist the LNs. Unsurprisingly, the Scottish LNs did not respond to any further communication from the SLF and reunion failed to materialise. Indeed, the LNs allied itself to the Unionists and remained in the coalition government after May 1945. The Liberals' hope of reviving its organisation by absorbing some of the LN branches and MPs was dashed.

By March 1945, the Liberals were still struggling not only to find suitable candidates, but to affiliate new branches which were being set up in anticipation of the election.<sup>44</sup> At the SLF AGM in April 1945, Beveridge – who was becoming the de-facto leader of the party in Scotland – confidently declared that the party would field enough candidates to offer a viable alternative government. It was banking on recruiting young candidates from the forces and the newly enfranchised on the updated electoral register.<sup>45</sup> However, the SLF did not set up a special election committee until VE day. Beveridge suggested that it should appoint a chair who was able to commit a lot of time to the task. Rather ironically, he ended up chairing the committee despite his repeated reminders that he was unable to give much time to it. The committee were also keen that they have the authority to approve candidates rather than London because of the number of associations not yet in existence.<sup>46</sup> The press report of the meeting contained a plea for Liberals to assist in reviving local associations, raising funds, organising meetings and providing support to candidates.<sup>47</sup> To make a public appeal for engagement in such a wide range of electoral activities was an

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<sup>44</sup> NLS, Acc.11765/14, minutes of meeting of the executive of the SLF, 7 March 1945.

<sup>45</sup> *The Scotsman*, 26 April 1945.

<sup>46</sup> NLS, Acc.11765/14, minutes of a special meeting of the executive of the SLF, 7 May 1945.

<sup>47</sup> *The Scotsman*, 14 May 1945.

indication that the Liberal party was in a precarious position. Evidently their political inertia for the duration of the war was increasing likely to become a long-term problem.

### **Minor Parties' Organisational Planning**

For the minor political parties, many were eager to plan for the forthcoming general election hoping that it would revive their operations. As discussed in the earlier chapters, some parties attempted to use the truce and wartime by-elections to store political capital for the post-war period, using the publicity and lack of competition to place their ideas before the electorate. But across the spectrum, minor parties struggled as much as the larger political parties with the lack of activity caused by wartime conditions.

The minor party which suffered from the greatest decline during the war years was the ILP. It had unsuccessfully contested two by-elections during the war, in neither case had the vote been hugely impressive or had it thoroughly challenged the government candidate. As Catriona MacDonald noted, the party had been in terminal decline since the beginning of the war with the Scottish Divisional Council losing income and struggling to recruit members with its pacifist policies.<sup>48</sup> In advance of the general election, the ILP began to draw up lists of potential seats to contest. One covered the eventuality of Labour staying in the coalition, meaning more seats would be contested, whereas the other, if Labour left the coalition would be smaller in scope.<sup>49</sup> Beyond this, only sporadic attempts at planning were indicated in the party records. When Labour declared that it would leave the coalition after the European war ended, the ILP decided that left-wing unity was more important than old

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<sup>48</sup> Catriona M.M. MacDonald, 'Following the Procession: Scottish Labour 1918-45, in Matthew Worley (ed.) *Labour's Grass Roots: Essays on the Activities and Experiences of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918-45* (Aldershot, 2005) pp. 33-44, at p. 41

<sup>49</sup> LPA, minutes of the ILP NAC, 5-6 November 1943.

grievances between the parties. At the annual conference in 1945, the ILP decided to seek affiliation with the Labour party before the general election.<sup>50</sup> The party voted by 89 votes to 72 to re-affiliate as long as the ILP were able to remain an organisational unit putting forward its own policy.<sup>51</sup> Several Scottish branches of the ILP, which held a lot of influence in the movement, opposed affiliation as they believed it better to strengthen the party than be absorbed into the wider Labour movement.<sup>52</sup> Fortunately for those branches, Labour rejected the ILP's affiliation bid.<sup>53</sup> In the months before the general election the ILP was in disarray, unable to agree internally on future intentions or policies.

While the ILP's woes were as a result of terminal decline, the Communists' decision to support the coalition government in 1941 had confined it to the fringes of politics. Although the Communist party's membership peaked in the UK at an all-time high of 56,000 in 1942, by 1945 it had fallen to 45,000.<sup>54</sup> It had hoped this increase in support during the war would translate to securing more seats at the general election. Indeed, the party's executive committee began considering its election campaign in November 1943, when it proposed a recruitment drive as well as focus on improving relations with the Labour party in the localities.<sup>55</sup> The Scottish sections of the party convened special branch meetings to consider prospective candidates in the spring of 1944, with endorsements from eight Scottish constituencies confirmed by the central executive in May 1944.<sup>56</sup> In order to have a better chance of fighting a good campaign, the party increased its membership fees in August

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<sup>50</sup> LPA, minutes of the ILP Scottish annual conference, 27-28 January 1945.

<sup>51</sup> *The Scotsman*, 2 April 1945.

<sup>52</sup> LPA, minutes of meeting of the ILP annual Scottish conference, 27-28 January 1945.

<sup>53</sup> LPA, NEC Files 1945, minutes of meeting of the policy committee, 11 May 1945.

<sup>54</sup> Andrew Thorpe, 'The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-45', *The Historical Journal*, 43, 3 (2000), pp. 777-800, at p. 781.

<sup>55</sup> CPGBA, CP/CENT/EC/01/01, minutes of meeting of the executive committee, 21 November 1943.

<sup>56</sup> CPGBA, CP/CENT/EC/01/01 minutes of meeting of the executive committee, 21 May 1944.

1944.<sup>57</sup> Despite this early drive in electoral planning, the Communists still placed most of its focus on electoral unity and eventual affiliation with Labour.

The Scottish National Party entered the 1945 general election campaign buoyed by the success of Robert McIntyre at the Motherwell by-election in April of that year. Unlike the ILP and Communists, the party was arguably in better shape at the end of the war than it had been at the beginning. McIntyre's reforms of the party from 1943 had helped to shape policy, placing it on the centre left of the spectrum. The SNP was also undeniably a political party, as Finlay notes it had been veering towards the realms of a pressure group in the late 1930s because of an inability to define electoral policy.<sup>58</sup> By June 1943, the decision on contesting elections was solidified by a national council decision to encourage the formation of local branches in preparation for the next general election.<sup>59</sup>

At the party's annual conference in May 1944, discussion centred around the plan for the general election. It wanted to ensure candidates were adopted far in advance and aimed to contest up to 20 seats.<sup>60</sup> Despite the initial optimism, by November 1944, Arthur Donaldson gave the national council a grim verdict on the party's readiness for the election. He reported that finance was deficient within local organisations while funds were inadequate for the planned campaign.<sup>61</sup> The SNP's political machinery was rather lacklustre, and the party's ambitions were tempered by its lack of financial flexibility which there were only half-hearted attempts to remedy. The timing of the Motherwell by-election in April 1945 was fortuitous for the SNP as it gave it a reason to revive its electoral machinery. The party

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<sup>57</sup> CPGBA, CP/CENT/EC/01/01 proposals for increasing party dues, 17 August 1944.

<sup>58</sup> Richard J Finlay, 'Pressure Group or Political Party, the Nationalist Impact on Scottish Politics 1928-1945' *Twentieth Century British History*, 3 (1992), pp. 274-97 at pp. 285-6.

<sup>59</sup> NLS, Acc.10090/3, resolution on internal party affairs, 14 June 1943.

<sup>60</sup> NLS, Acc.6419/44/4, notes on annual conference, 12 May 1944.

<sup>61</sup> NLS, Acc.6419/44/1, minutes of the SNP National Council, 7 October 1944.

also placed all its financial eggs in this basket, suspending all activity not connected to the by-election.<sup>62</sup>

Although it had intended to nominate candidates and agents early, it was noted at a meeting held in late April 1945 that the party had still not arranged matters sufficiently.<sup>63</sup>

The SNP only appointed a full-time agent in April 1945, who did not have long to gauge the readiness of the party before the election. Like most small parties, the SNP had ambitious plans for the election, but in practice was unable to execute them. These problems occurred due to a lack of funding and personnel. It was an experience shared by all political parties.

The issues caused by the electoral truce and the lack of electoral contests resulted in moribund organisations for all Scottish political parties. The analysis above has foregrounded that the Unionists managed to re-invigorate its operations in Scotland rather better than its Labour counterparts, but the situation was reversed at a national, British, level. The slow response of CCO to the impending election, as Thorpe has discussed, impacted upon the ability of certain organisations in England to fully recover. In Scotland however, the nucleus of activity that the SCUA had maintained during the war years aided the ability to recover.

In contrast, Labour was very well-organised centrally, with election planning beginning in earnest in early 1944. Yet the NEC's carefully managed central planning did not translate to Scotland. The historically poor organisational state of the Scottish CLPs meant they were frequently incapable of enacting centrally-made decisions. The evidence available from the scant records of Scottish organisations suggest a haphazard approach to planning which affected the efficiency of Labour's campaign.

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<sup>62</sup> NLS, Acc.6419/44/1, minutes of meeting of the SNP National Council 13 January 1945.

<sup>63</sup> NLS, Acc.6419/44/1, minutes of meeting of the SNP National Council, 28 April 1945.

The Liberals and the minor parties appeared to engage in much discussion but little action, as a lack of personnel and finances impacted on their abilities to have proper plans in place. The role reversal between the Unionist's and Labour's organisational planning in Scotland may not be the sole reason for the fact that the former's election performance was superior than across the rest of Britain. But, weak planning and inadequate electoral machinery undoubtedly poses acute challenges for political campaigns. For an election campaign, it can translate to poorer than anticipated results.

### **Election Policy and Campaigns**

While the main planks of party policy for the 1945 general election are well discussed in the existing literature, the way the parties' election campaigns were portrayed in Scotland is worth considering. Only national manifestos were issued, but some candidates tried to tailor their election appeals to apply to conditions in their constituencies.

The Unionists were fortunate in Scotland to have the backing of all the major daily newspapers. This made the task of communicating its policies and propaganda far easier than the party managed in some parts of the UK, where, as McCallum and Readman have calculated, the press support was more evenly split between Labour and the Conservatives.<sup>64</sup> Addison noted that in England the left-wing press increased its readership during the 1930s, and by 1947 the left-wing dailies made up around 48% of daily readership.<sup>65</sup> The Unionists was very aware of this advantage, its press officer encouraged candidates to send him regular activity reports as the party would be sure to receive a favourable mention in the press.<sup>66</sup> Labour was concerned at the lack of representation in

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<sup>64</sup> R.B. McCallum and Alison Readman, *The General Election of 1945*, (Oxford, 1947) p. 181.

<sup>65</sup> Addison, *The Road to 1945*, pp. 152-3.

<sup>66</sup> CPA, SUMC 1/9, suggestions from press officer, 15 May 1945.

the press both locally and nationally in Scotland. Editors of local papers were contacted to ask for the same allocation as the Unionists.<sup>67</sup> Harvie noted that the press in Scotland was overwhelmingly right-wing and in terms of reporting local contests, the bias was around to 2:1 towards the Unionists.<sup>68</sup> Labour was left only with niche newspapers such as *Forward* to place the party's case before the electorate. This disadvantage for Labour in Scotland may well be a contributory factor to a poorer performance, especially when newspapers were read so widely by the public during this period.

The Unionists had a similar strategy to the rest of the Conservative party in centring its campaign around Churchill, irrespective of how well regarded he was in Scotland. The Eastern Divisional Council was more aware of the need to emphasis a general election policy which focused on Scottish interests and affairs. It proposed a joint committee with the Western division to enact the idea.<sup>69</sup> However, this was not convened until May 1945, possibly prompted by the joint issues of the decision over the Forth Bridge and the SNP victory in Motherwell.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, this realisation to the desirability of a more tailored Scottish approach came rather late when campaign planning was already well advanced. The Unionist manifesto in comparison to the 'New Jerusalem' being proposed by the Labour party was rather 'small c' conservative. It placed Churchill front and centre carrying the name *Mr Churchill's Declaration of Policy to the Electors*.<sup>71</sup> But the manifesto's heavy emphasis on the war, the Empire and defence was at the expense of matters closer to home. Its main domestic focus was on a housing policy, something which it had previously had a good record on. Housing was an issue which was crucial to the electorate, especially in

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Harvie, p. 937.

<sup>69</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/44, meeting of the SCUA Eastern Divisional Council, 11 May 1945.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> CPA, PUB 155, Mr Churchill's Declaration of Policy to the Electors.

the larger cities of the central belt. In Glasgow constituencies, the Unionists were able to exploit this as the Labour controlled council did not have as strong a record on house building.<sup>72</sup> The focus throughout the manifesto was that most of the Beveridge report would be implemented, but private enterprise and freedom of choice were to be allowed.<sup>73</sup> The closing lines of the manifesto read.

Our programme is not based on unproven theories or fine phrases but upon principles that have been tested...while safeguarding our ancient liberties it tackles practical problems in a practical way.<sup>74</sup>

It was billed as a measured manifesto that appealed more to continuity rather than change. The manifesto appears to equate the new idea proposed by Labour to tackle widespread national issues as a threat to liberty and freedom. The statement also tries to diminish Labour's plans by commenting that they are just theories and that the Conservatives have safe and proven ways to tackle the problems. However, the years between 1942 and 1945 had shown that the electorate had an appetite for change, evidenced by the increase in votes for independent or minor party candidates in by-elections, particularly against Conservative candidates.<sup>75</sup> The party failed to pay attention to the opinion polls and was slow in responding to the mood for change. It was also noted by the Unionists' opponents that the party's manifesto contained little or no mention of the term Unionist or Conservative. Sir Stafford Cripps, when speaking at a meeting in Glasgow, stated 'I went

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<sup>72</sup> Smyth, 'Resisting Labour', p. 399.

<sup>73</sup> CPA, PUB 155, Mr Churchill's Declaration of Policy to the Electors.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Addison, 'By-Elections.' pp. 130-56.

through it with a fine-tooth comb to find if there was anything there. There is no mention of the word Conservative at all'.<sup>76</sup>

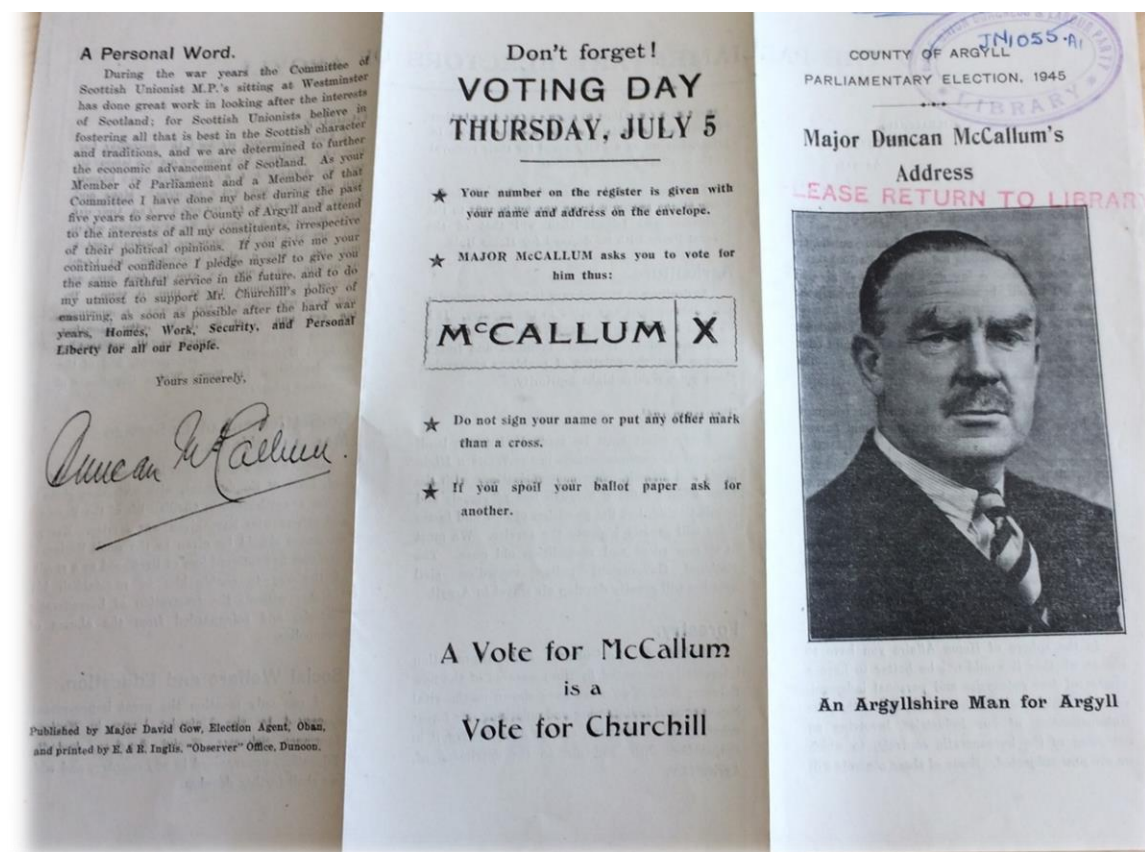
Instead, the party addresses used the term 'national candidate' based tenuously on the continuing coalition with the Liberal Nationals. The SCUA carefully considered solely using the 'national' tag in election literature with the planning committee deliberating placing 'vote national' on its posters. However, the SCUA secretary John Cranna felt the term was too vague and that the electorate would not understand or know what they were voting for. After much debate it was agreed to use the slogan 'vote Unionist and National Government'.<sup>77</sup> An example of the Unionists' reluctance to advertise its party colours can be seen in an election leaflet issued by Major McCallum, winner of the 1940 Argyllshire by-election, which barely mentioned the name Unionist on his election literature. He prefaced his name with 'an Argyllshire man for Argyllshire'.

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<sup>76</sup> *Forward*, 16 June 1945.

<sup>77</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/9(x), western division general organisation.

Figure 7



The most notable slogan was 'a vote for McCallum is a vote for Churchill'. There were only a few mentions in the text that he represented the Unionist party.<sup>78</sup> Other candidates highlighted that they supported the 'National Government' or encouraged voters to 'support Mr Churchill'.<sup>79</sup> The Unionists banked on the gratitude towards Churchill and his own personal popularity to carry it through. Maintaining the idea of a 'National Government' was a tactic deployed in the hope that the less knowledgeable amongst the electorate would vote for continuation of a Churchill government. Other political parties noticed this phenomenon during the campaign and mocked the Unionists for resorting to that tactic. In a speech Archibald Sinclair commented,

<sup>78</sup> LPA, JN1055.A1, election literature 1945.

<sup>79</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/127, 1945 general election literature.

Mr Churchill's party are like the grocer who, when he finds it hard to sell something under its old name, sticks on a new label ...Unless you want the Conservatives and Liberal Nationals for their own sake, don't buy them because they have a new label.<sup>80</sup>

The Unionists tried to continue the ideas which had served it fairly well in Scottish by-elections during the war by promoting ideas of national unity and assuaging party politics. However, as MO surveys showed throughout the latter part of the war, the public had not missed party-political conflicts and were more in favour of a continuing coalition.<sup>81</sup> This tactic to emphasise the Unionists' reluctance to break the coalition may have been a better strategy to follow than to focus so intensely on Churchill. The Unionist candidate for Caithness and Sutherland, Eric Gandar Dower, did try this approach to appeal to Labour and Liberal voters who were unhappy about the break-up of the coalition. But he also heavily emphasised his connection with Churchill.<sup>82</sup>

The Unionists faced a problem with the 'vote for Churchill' strategy in the Western Isles constituency when the Liberal candidate, Huntly Sinclair declared he would support Churchill as the leader of a National Government; much to the annoyance of the Unionist candidate who was using similar tactics.<sup>83</sup> It caused consternation in the constituency, but was a positive for the sitting Labour candidate, Malcolm McMillan as he could focus on issues concerning the local area. McMillan retained his seat with a slightly increased vote share indicating that his opponents were on the wrong track in terms of their campaign

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<sup>80</sup> *The Scotsman*, 29 June 1945.

<sup>81</sup> Fielding, 'What did the people want', p. 629.

<sup>82</sup> LPA, general election addresses.

<sup>83</sup> *The Scotsman*, 21 June 1945.

message.<sup>84</sup> The Unionists also banked on a visit from Churchill swaying constituencies in Lanarkshire where unemployment and housing were major concerns. *The Scotsman* remarked that Churchill's visits to the area had 'left a deep impression' which they believed would be a great asset to the Unionist candidates.<sup>85</sup> The party had forecast that it would hold the Scottish seats by a majority of eight.<sup>86</sup> The visit had given the party a false impression that it was correct in its predications for the Scottish poll. As noted by Pelling, certain sections of the electorate believed Churchill was 'above politics'.<sup>87</sup> They may have given him a great reception as a victorious war leader, but not endorsed him as leader of the Conservative and Unionists. When Churchill visited Edinburgh and Glasgow via several stops in the west coast area on 28 June, the *Glasgow Herald* and *The Scotsman* reported the event as though he was already victorious.<sup>88</sup> This overconfidence of the result in the press was not helpful in making clear the reality of the election. In contrast, *Forward* commented on this with the heading as "Fuhrer Churchill" with the article stating.

This attempt to create and exploit mass emotion, to idolise one man and to make people think he is the only possible leader, is the British Tory attempt to intimate the Fuhrer worship of Nazis and to secure control of political power.<sup>89</sup>

The other parties also commented on this problem with the Unionist strategy. Liberal leader Archibald Sinclair observed that the party was avoiding any discussion of social,

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<sup>84</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 620.

<sup>85</sup> *The Scotsman*, 30 June 1945.

<sup>86</sup> CPA, CCO 4/2/61 - General Election - Area Agents' Election forecasts, 1945.

<sup>87</sup> Pelling, 'The 1945 General Election', p. 405.

<sup>88</sup> *The Scotsman*, 29 June 1945 and *Glasgow Herald*, 29 June 1945.

<sup>89</sup> *Forward*, 30 June 1945.

economic or political issues and was turning the election into 'a vote of confidence in and thankfulness of our warrior Prime Minister'.<sup>90</sup>

Not satisfied with the emphatic coverage of the Unionists, *The Scotsman* began an attack on Labour. The week after parliament was dissolved, the newspaper noted.

That despite their best efforts to appear as though the movement is comprised of sober and statesman-like members, their efforts are lessened every time one of 'the wild-men' of the party opens their mouth.<sup>91</sup>

They specifically highlighted Bevan, Cripps, Laski and Shinwell as amongst those who provided fodder for the opposition. It was a subtle effort to undermine any authority gained by leading Labour figures like Attlee and Morrison during the war, de-legitimising their status by association with the more radical party members. The war had given them the opportunity to show they were capable of holding high-level responsible positions at a time of crisis and performing these roles very well indeed. These roles had also brought public attention to Attlee and Morrison who emerged as strong contenders. This was inconvenient for the Unionists and their supporters who wished to label the Labour Party as radical, staffed by Bevan and Cripps types who would unleash chaos onto the country.

This dismissive attitude towards Labour continued in the way the election campaign was reported. *The Scotsman* ran a feature from 16 June to 11 July called 'Round the Constituencies', where they would report on the prospective candidates, their campaigns and chances of success. They would always list the Unionist candidate first, even in constituencies where Labour held the seat by a large majority. The paper would talk down

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<sup>90</sup> *The Scotsman*, 5 July 1945.

<sup>91</sup> *The Scotsman*, 19 June 1945.

Labour's chances and talk up that of the Unionist candidate. An example of this was Dumbarton Burghs, where the Labour candidate, David Kirkwood, had held the seat since 1922 with a majority of 9500. *The Scotsman* declared his chances of winning as 'not fantastically high'. They then noted that the Unionist candidate, who had very few credentials other than his military status, was 'well qualified' because he was 'a young native of Dumbarton'.<sup>92</sup> Kirkwood in fact triumphed with 65 per cent of the vote, indicating the spurious analysis of *The Scotsman*.

There was a similar situation in its reporting of the Rutherglen Constituency which was won by a Unionist in 1935 by a tiny 581 majority.<sup>93</sup> *The Scotsman* declared confidently, 'popular belief has it that Rutherglen is a Labour stronghold, but that is not borne out by the facts. Political opinion among the electors is fairly evenly divided'.<sup>94</sup> *The Scotsman* and the Unionists may have wished that to be the case, but the seat was lost by the Unionists with a 10 per cent swing to Labour, giving the candidate a majority of 8002 votes.<sup>95</sup> The bias continued in the west of Scotland where the headline in the round up of Lanarkshire constituencies was 'socialism opposed in Lanarkshire'.<sup>96</sup> The report on the constituencies, several of which were held by the Unionists, contained biased analysis on the merits of the candidates returning from active service. The Unionists had been optimistic for its prospects in the west coast area since the SCUA western division had maintained activity during the war. While the party attempted to win the electorate over on matters of housing, the focus for Labour was the loss of industry in the area. However, much to the Unionists' chagrin it

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 636.

<sup>94</sup> *The Scotsman*, 19 June 1945.

<sup>95</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 636

<sup>96</sup> *The Scotsman*, 23 June 1945.

lost Lanark, Lanarkshire North, Renfrewshire West and Rutherglen to Labour and failed to gain Motherwell from the SNP, losing that to Labour also.<sup>97</sup>

*The Scotsman* was unable to keep a critical tone out of its reporting on Labour candidates who were well regarded locally and had a strong record in dealing with constituency matters. Indeed, being well regarded locally was dismissed as a bad quality when it was a Labour candidate, but a good quality when it was a Unionist. As mentioned above, they extolled the value of an inexperienced Unionist candidate against a longstanding well regarded Labour candidate purely because he was from the constituency. As the *Glasgow Herald* noted in an analysis of the election, the main parties had reached a point of agreement on several major areas of policy such as social security, health and the resettlement of those serving in the forces. The issue for the parties was to find sufficient ways to ensure their star policies had wide-ranging appeal and ability to be applied in the constituencies.<sup>98</sup> Abstract ideas did not appeal to the average Scottish voter, their concerns focused on adequate housing and employment.

Labour, in contrast to the Unionists, focused its campaign on issues which mattered more to the electorate, particularly employment, health and housing. Although it had a centralised campaign sub-committee set up in February 1945, as Harvie noted, this quickly lost touch with what was happening in the constituencies.<sup>99</sup> In the Labour party archives, election addresses from twenty-five Scottish candidates have been retained. Careful analysis of these revealed that every candidate mentioned housing, twenty-two mentioned social security and health and seventeen made direct appeals to returning service personnel.

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<sup>97</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, pp. 633-6 & p. 645.

<sup>98</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 23 June 1945.

<sup>99</sup> Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland,' p. 935.

Other commonly mentioned topics were: education, control of monopolies, nationalisation and full employment.<sup>100</sup> Some candidates used memorable slogans to highlight Labour's leading policies. For example, the Glasgow Maryhill candidate declared, 'Labour elected means housing erected'.<sup>101</sup> The candidates mostly highlighted the policy laid down by the party leadership, although they emphasised their local knowledge and connections in their biographical details. Indeed, the majority of the twenty-five addresses were not standardised, the only exception being some of the addresses from the west coast area where the candidates all used the same template. As Harvie noted, the main Labour manifesto contained no mention of devolution. However, in the surviving election literature almost half the candidates mentioned that Scotland should have some form of devolution, although it was far down their list of election pledges. Only three completely following the party line, stating that there should be solutions to fix Scottish issues without a parliament. The remaining candidates did not mention devolution at all. It suggested that, on this subject, the Labour leadership and its potential Scottish MPs were not aligned.

With Labour's organisational strength in Scotland at a low-ebb, the Communist party – at least according to its own records – appeared to have stepped in and supported many election campaigns across Scotland. One party correspondent remarked, 'the party response was splendid, and it is clear when big political issues are at stake, we can get a most impressive mobilisation of comrades'.<sup>102</sup> The Communists had organisational abilities that Labour lacked. While Thorpe does not give the Communists much credit for assisting in the Labour campaign, in Scotland it was rather different with the much larger Communist

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> LPA, general election addresses 1945, 'the candidature of Councillor William Hannan for the Glasgow Maryhill division'.

<sup>102</sup> CPGBA, memorandum from District Secretary to National Organiser, 18 July 1945.

party membership and more close relationships between the parties and their personnel.<sup>103</sup> Yet the records must be read with caution as there is a hyperbolic reporting of the assistance with an eye to their 1946 affiliation bid. It was significant that some reports compiled after the election mentioned Labour was reluctant to use Communist party members, but, 'this was quickly broken down and we had close co-operation'.<sup>104</sup> These reports mentioned that many party members chanted slogans in support of Labour and spoke on its behalf at meetings. However, it was not mentioned whether Labour was aware of these activities on its behalf, or if the Communists continued its methods from wartime by-elections of advertising speakers and events without those mentioned being informed. An election report from the Falkirk area declared that the local Labour party tried to use the constitution to prevent Communist workers from assisting with the campaign. However, they were ignored by the local Labour membership who worked closely with the Communists. One commented that 'if it had not been for the Communists very little real campaigning would have taken place'.<sup>105</sup> In West Lothian, one Communist report gave an indication of the parlous state of some Scottish DLPs.

The fact that Labour increased their majority by 7000 votes was certainly not due to any zeal or organisation on the part of the local Labour party who in their optimistic moods expected to scrape through with a narrow majority...it is generally appreciated within the LP that our party played an indispensable role in the campaign.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Thorpe, 'Locking out the Communists' pp. 221–50.

<sup>104</sup> CPGBA, general election reports, Ayrshire election report, undated, p. 1.

<sup>105</sup> CPGBA, report on general election activities in support of Labour candidates in Stirlingshire.

<sup>106</sup> CPGBA, report on the election campaign in West Lothian.

One of the most interesting points from the Communist party minutes related to a summary of work undertaken in the Lanarkshire district. The reports indicated that Labour's organisation was weak in the rural areas of the constituency. Therefore, the Communists stepped in and by all accounts stepped on quite a few Labour agents' toes. The report mentioned that in Cambuslang a meeting was 'forced on the agent and taken by party speakers'.<sup>107</sup> In Motherwell, where Labour aimed to regain the seat from the SNP, the local agent sent 2000 envelopes to be addressed by the local Communist party.<sup>108</sup> Previous bad relationships in some areas were amended and assistance from the Communists was accepted 'to the maximum'.<sup>109</sup> One of these was the Rutherglen constituency which voted by a majority of 8000 to return the Labour candidate, ousting the Unionist.<sup>110</sup> The Communists remarked that the result had not been due to the Labour CLP being well organised, but was a consequence of its assistance.<sup>111</sup> The result of this co-operation bore fruit for Labour as it gained five Lanarkshire seats, four from the Unionists and one from the SNP. The results lead to the conclusion that the assistance given by the Communists may have been a factor in helping Labour to win seats from the Unionists, especially in an area where it may have been difficult for the party to organise itself. It is unfortunate that only the Communist records survive, as the accuracy with which it reported its activities is questionable. However, it cannot be denied that the Communists excelled at simple campaign responsibilities such as selling election literature, chalking slogans and advertising meetings. Party records show Labour was happy to let the Communists manage all these essential tasks in the majority of constituencies. The sluggish nature of Labour's Scottish

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<sup>107</sup> CPGBA, report on the Lanarkshire area general election campaign. c. August 1945.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 636.

<sup>111</sup> CPGBA, report on the Lanarkshire area.

organisation seems to have been buoyed in these vital campaign areas by the Communists.

Although it is impossible to quantify how much of an influence this had on the result, it would have helped the party in the areas where it had fewer active organisations.

However, the Communists directed so much energy to assist Labour that it caused the party to struggle with its own campaigns in Scottish constituencies. This was bizarre as the party's executive committee began considering its election campaign in November 1943.<sup>112</sup> The second front campaign, which had pre-occupied the party through 1942-3, became obsolete with the tide of the war turning in Russia's favour, leaving the party free to divert its energy in a different direction. Alongside campaigning for a more inclusive electoral truce, and its general election preparations, the party campaigned for a more democratised parliament; calling for a system of proportional representation.<sup>113</sup> The party knew that under Labour's rules the likelihood of its affiliation bid being discussed before 1946 was low. Nevertheless, it continued to use its influence with favourable trade unions like the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) to lobby the Labour party into considering a progressive unity electoral policy for the coming general election.<sup>114</sup> The importance of Scottish support for the party was evident when deciding which constituencies to contest. Of the thirty constituencies earmarked in mid-1944 as being potential targets, eleven were Scottish seats.<sup>115</sup> The Scottish branch of the party also held a successful unity conference. This was an attempt to bring together several sympathetic far-left groups into the movement to form a cohesive force ahead of the next election.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> CPGBA, CP/CENT/EC/01/01, minutes of meeting of the executive committee, 21 November 1943.

<sup>113</sup> Laybourn & Murphy, *Under the Red Flag*, p. 136.

<sup>114</sup> LPA, CPGBA, CP/CENT/EC/01/01, minutes of executive meeting of the Communist party, 21 May 1944.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid* and 18 July 1944.

<sup>116</sup> Robert Jackson Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929-1985: a documentary analysis of the movement* (London, 1991), p. 459.

Nevertheless, it seemed when organising campaigns for its own candidates, the party were not as well-prepared. The election report for Scottish constituencies noted, ‘the Scottish campaign started late. Much of the campaign was affected by the poor party organisation and by the late appointment of election agents’.<sup>117</sup> In West Fife – the only seat the party held – the organisation was especially bad. The division was completely unprepared, there was an absence of canvassing before the election and little enthusiasm in party branches.<sup>118</sup> The Communists compounded its own problems by contesting seats which it had little chance of winning due to fierce competition from the main parties. It contested five constituencies, far fewer than any original intentions in the electoral planning phase where up to twenty constituencies were considered.<sup>119</sup> The party conceded that apart from West Fife, the other four were hopeless causes. In Greenock and Kirkcaldy, the Communists faced opposition from another three candidates. It was worse in Glasgow Central and Shettleton where it faced four other candidates. This split the party’s already low vote even further, and the report compiled by the CPGB rightly questioned why these seats had been contested.<sup>120</sup> The party in Scotland was not helped by fact that the national organiser, Peter Kerrigan, was put forward as a candidate against his wishes for the Glasgow Shettleton seat.<sup>121</sup> Although the minutes from the Scottish committee of this period have not been retained, the references made within central committee meetings indicated that it had a lot of autonomy over decisions. If the Scottish committee overruled a central decision on a constituency being contested or a candidate, that recommendation was readily accepted. However, in terms of election campaigning, that could also be a weakness. This was

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<sup>117</sup> CPGBA, area reports on the 1945 general election, August 1945, p. 3.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> CPGBA, report on district recommendations for candidates, N.D.

<sup>120</sup> CPGBA, area reports on the 1945 general election, August 1945, p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> CPGBA, minutes of meeting of the executive committee, 18 March 1944.

reflected in the post-election reports; that Scotland had been left to run its own campaign and was rather disorganised<sup>122</sup>

In terms of other minor parties, they mostly banked on the local connections and the personal appeal of their candidates. This was particularly the case with the ILP and the Liberal Nationals. The LNs fielded seven candidates mostly in the east coast area, Inverness, Rosshire and Dumfries, traditionally Liberal-leaning areas.<sup>123</sup> As David Dutton notes, it ran in almost full co-operation with the Unionists and was openly hostile to the Liberals' policies.<sup>124</sup> The party also had a twenty-point manifesto, making the comparison between the LNs and the Liberals even more confusing for the electorate. There was little difference between the LNs and Unionists in terms of policy, with both declaring to put national before party interests to support a Churchill-led government. It was critical of Labour's planned economy and was similar to the Unionists in emphasising international affairs at the expense of domestic policy.<sup>125</sup> In general, its manifesto pledges centred around 'support for the small man' by freeing up business from bureaucratic controls, the full restoration of civil liberties; as well as the health and social reform advocated by the main Liberal party.<sup>126</sup> The LNs was struck in the national stakes by the swing to Labour losing many of its prominent MPs. Its vote in Scotland was similarly poor, losing four seats; three to Independent Liberals and party leader Ernest Brown lost his seat to Labour.<sup>127</sup> For the Liberal Nationals it was its MPs' personal appeal rather than the party policy which aided its few remaining MPs to retain their seats. The fact that the LNs lost three seats to independent Liberals would

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<sup>122</sup> CPGBA, reports on general election, document E, general information, August 1945.

<sup>123</sup> *The Scotsman*, 28 May 1945.

<sup>124</sup> Dutton, *The Liberals in Schism*, p. 155.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *The Scotsman*, 18 June 1945.

<sup>127</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 603.

suggest that Liberalism was not the problem, but its election policy and alignment with the Unionists which caused this electoral failure.

Similarly, personal appeal was all the ILP had to offer the electorate. With its failure to be re-affiliated to Labour before the election, it announced that it would only fight the three seats it currently held in Scotland to ensure the vote was not split between it and Labour candidates.<sup>128</sup> Maxton admitted that the ILP differed little in terms of policy to Labour and essentially the electorate was voting for the candidate, their long-standing service and personality.<sup>129</sup> Aside from a greater emphasis on peace and more visceral attacks of the Unionists, the ILP was advocating a similar domestic policy to Labour. For the minor parties, the appeal of personality was crucial to combat attacks from the main parties which focused more heavily on party policy than the concerns of the locality.

The SNP, in contrast to other minor parties, offered some more distinctive policies, from an open advocacy of independence to its pride in having no 'London control' over its party. However, the SNP did share similarities to other minor parties in being disorganised. It only finalised their candidate and constituency selections on 26 May.<sup>130</sup> It made no attempt to fight any rural constituencies, instead its efforts were focused in towns and cities where it had support bases and branches. The party was not in a strong position financially, having only around £600 of centrally held funds to fight for eight candidates, which the major parties could afford to spend per constituency. Some longer established constituencies had

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<sup>128</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 25 June 1945.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> NLS, Acc.6419 box 44/4, minutes of meeting of SNP national council, 26 May 1945.

additional funds which could be added to local effort, but the party estimated the election expenses per constituency was around £350.<sup>131</sup>

The party continued with a policy similar to the Motherwell by-election campaign with the main focus being that only a Scottish parliament could solve Scotland's problems. It continued to emphasise the importance of stopping industry drifting away from Scotland, a policy which had made an impact in the by-election.<sup>132</sup> The party received very little detail in the press about its election campaign as it was overshadowed by the Scottish press' determination to put across the Unionists' perspective against Labour. The Liberal Nationals, who fielded almost the same number of candidates as the SNP, were given far more column inches, especially in *The Scotsman* because of their support for the national government. Even in *Forward*, the SNP campaign was ignored at the expense of Labour and the ILP. It was only able to place its perspective before the electorate in the *Scots Independent*; the party's own newspaper. This meant it was unlikely to attract those not already faithful to the party cause. The column inches it had gained during wartime by-elections were obliterated as party politics resumed with the SNP barely registering on the campaign radar.

The electoral truce and wartime by-elections had allowed all the small parties a unique platform. For a brief period, the political playing field was levelled, allowing small parties to present their ideas to the nation. Yet, as soon as the electoral truce and coalition were over, this window of opportunity was closed.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid and Malcolm Baines, 'The Liberal Party and the 1945 General Election', *Contemporary British History*, 9, 1 (1995) pp. 48-61 at p. 58.

<sup>132</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 28 June 1945.

### **Candidates and Close Contests**

The 1945 election saw Labour field the most candidates out of all the parties nationwide. In Scotland it placed candidates in constituencies which it had not tried in many years, such as Perth and Kinross, which had always been a Unionist stronghold.<sup>133</sup> It did show that the party was serious in trying to win as many constituencies as possible, even those that it was unlikely to gain. On nomination day, 25 June 1945, *The Scotsman* reported that around a third of Scottish candidates were from the military; with most of them representing the Unionists. There were also no unopposed returns in Scotland. Out of 74 seats there were thirty-six seats featuring a two-candidate contest, twenty-five with three, five contests with four nominees and two with five candidates.<sup>134</sup> So there was almost an equal number of multiple contests per seat as there was a straight fight between two candidates. It indicated intense competition for seats in Scotland. The table below indicates the breakdown of these candidates by party.

**Figure 8**

<b>Political Party</b>	<b>Number of Candidates</b>
Labour	66
Unionist	63
Liberal	23
Scottish National Party	8
Liberal National	7

<sup>133</sup> *The Scotsman*, 19 June 1945.

<sup>134</sup> *The Scotsman*, 26 June 1945. This excludes the two-member constituency of Dundee where there were six candidates for two seats and the Combined Scottish Universities seat which had five candidates competing for three seats.

Communist	5
Independent Labour Party	3
Independents	3
Common Wealth	2
Independent Unionist	1
Independent Scottish Nationalist	1
Independent Socialist	1
National	1
Labour Co-Operative	1
Protestant Action	1
<b>TOTAL SCOTTISH CANDIDATES</b>	186

Labour and the Unionists were almost evenly matched, but the Liberals showing was very poor considering the party's previous successes in many constituencies across Scotland. It had hoped to have a fighting complement of candidates, yet the Liberals only fielded twenty-three candidates covering one third of Scottish constituencies. The UK total was 306, covering less than half of all constituencies.<sup>135</sup> The Liberals' policy attempted to chart the middle way between the support for free enterprise championed by the Conservatives and the nationalisation drive from the Labour party. It also relied heavily on Beveridge's popularity in the manifesto to encourage voters to support it and not Labour. The Liberal candidate for the Glasgow Central constituency, Major Glen, declared in his election literature.

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<sup>135</sup> Baines, 'The Liberal Party', p. 49.

The Liberal party is pledged to support the Beveridge Plan for social security. The party to carry through this great measure is the party to which Sir William Beveridge belongs.<sup>136</sup>

The Liberals obviously hoped that by claiming Beveridge as its own it could usurp Labour's reformist credentials. However, as Fielding noted, the 1945 election was a long time after Beveridge's idea had originally been proposed and the Liberals had waited too long to claim autonomy. Labour had very enthusiastically accepted the policy, and as a result became more associated with it.<sup>137</sup> Baines believes that the Liberals' aim was to distinguish itself from the Conservative and Unionists and not Labour as it was generally believed the Conservatives would win, albeit with a reduced majority.<sup>138</sup> He also noted that the 1945 manifesto was the most radical left-wing policy in the party's history and was essentially socialist in nature.<sup>139</sup> This would suggest the social programme from all parties in the general election was more centrist. Hitherto, economic policy was where the Unionists stood alone on the right of the political spectrum.

There was an inconsistent style of election literature across the Liberal candidates, giving an even greater insight into the disorganisation faced by the party. While most candidates ensured the main ideas of the twenty-point manifesto were included, some candidates attempted to explain the ideological differences between the three parties and what they stood for without explaining their election policy. One candidate who did this, Lieutenant Morgan for Glasgow Kelvingrove constituency, achieved a very poor result gaining only 3%

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<sup>136</sup> NLS Acc.10424/128, election address, Major Norman M Glen.

<sup>137</sup> Fielding, 'The meaning of 1945', p. 633-4.

<sup>138</sup> Baines, 'The Liberal Party', p. 51.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

of the vote.<sup>140</sup> In Paisley where the party defended its seat, Lady-Glen Coates tailored her appeal towards Scottish and local interests, as well as including social reform policies. She was hampered by the fact that the Paisley branch had been almost entirely dormant during the war. The lack of a visible Liberal presence in the constituency had certainly been a contributory factor in her defeat.<sup>141</sup>

The beleaguered Liberals were unsafe in even its longest held constituencies. Archibald Sinclair who had held the seat of Caithness and Sutherland since 1922 had somewhat neglected his constituency during the war as the air ministry took precedence. As Baines has argued, Sinclair somewhat relied upon the goodwill he had cultivated amongst his constituents without addressing the issues that truly concerned them.<sup>142</sup> Labour and the Unionists stood strong candidates against him and, in one of the tightest election contests in the country, Sinclair lost the seat to his Unionist opponent by 61 votes. The result was as follows:

Eric Gandar Dower, Unionist – 5564 (33.5%)

Robert Ian McInnes, Labour – 5558 (33.4%)

Sir Archibald Sinclair, Liberal 5503, (33.1%)

Unionist Majority of 6.<sup>143</sup>

As shown above, the margin between the three candidates was miniscule. Sinclair had relied too heavily on his past record and had been punished for his absence.

Overall, the results for the Liberals in Scotland were terrible, the loss of all its MPs and party

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<sup>140</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 592.

<sup>141</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 224.

<sup>142</sup> Baines, 'The Liberal Party' p. 51.

<sup>143</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 620.

leader were a severe blow. Indeed, out of the twenty-three seats it contested in Scotland, the Liberals lost deposits in eleven seats.<sup>144</sup> The Liberals had several interlinking problems in Scotland, the terminal decline of local parties could not be halted despite the efforts of the SLF and Lady Glen-Coates as wartime conditions placed additional strain upon the party. This level of decline was not easy to reverse in the short months between the war ending and the election. As Liberal Chief Whip Sir Percy Harris reflected,

I wrote to many associations and pleaded with them to adopt candidates...but all in vain. A strange apathy crept over some of the officeholders, they seemed content to rest on their former laurels.<sup>145</sup>

The Liberals were incapable of undertaking the monumental task of reviving the party organisation; instead it ignored the problems hoping that Beveridge would carry it through. The party had been unable to find candidates until almost the last minute and the candidates it was able to recruit were mostly young first-time campaigners.<sup>146</sup> Without strong central or local leadership to guide these inexperienced candidates the likelihood of them succeeding was even lower. It was an undeniable blow for the party to lose all its seats in Scotland where it had previously seen so much success.

The Liberals were a victim of the Labour campaign message which was 'vote straight left to keep the Conservatives out'.<sup>147</sup> This indicated to the electorate that voting for the Liberals was a wasted vote and may assist the Unionists to sneak candidates over the line. This was reinforced by the press with *The Scotsman* declaring that a vote for the Liberals was a vote

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<sup>144</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 240.

<sup>145</sup> Baines, *The Liberal Party* p. 58.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, p. 54.

for indecision.<sup>148</sup> There were several constituencies where the presence of Liberals and other minor party candidates did hamper the main parties' ability to win or retain a seat.<sup>149</sup> In 21 out of 71 seats, the presence of candidates from the Liberals and other minor parties caused this to occur, with an even split in results between the Unionists and Labour.<sup>150</sup> One such example was in the Edinburgh West constituency, which had changed party allegiance several times since 1918. The Unionist managed to retain the seat from a Labour challenger by just over 1000 votes, but the Liberal candidate polled 3256 votes. If the Liberals had not entered a candidate those votes may have aided the Labour candidate to win.<sup>151</sup>

Furthermore, in some seats where it was a straight fight between the Unionists and Labour, the results belied the true nature of the contests. Four seats recorded majorities of less than 1000. In Aberdeenshire, Ayr and Glasgow Partick, the Unionists held off a Labour candidate. These seats may have fallen to Labour if a little more effort had been expended during the campaign. In Ayr the gain was especially impressive given the Unionists in 1935 had won with a 12600 majority which had been slashed to 728 in 1945.<sup>152</sup> This would suggest that results were closer than it would first appear. Although Labour was disappointed with its results overall, the small margins in several seats showed the party was making progress in Unionist held areas.

### **Results and Conclusions**

Scottish voters cast their votes in two different elections with the majority of constituencies casting their ballots on 5 July. However, there was a 'little election' held on 13 July where

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<sup>148</sup> *The Scotsman*, 2 July 1945.

<sup>149</sup> By this I mean if there was a straight fight between the Unionists and Labour and without the presence of the minor party candidates, then the results may have changed in many of those seats.

<sup>150</sup> Please see Appendix C for the full list of results in Scotland during the 1945 general election.

<sup>151</sup> Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections*, p. 584.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, p. 575.

thirteen Scottish constituencies in the southern part of the country voted in order to avoid clashing with local holidays.<sup>153</sup> The results, however, were not to be announced until 26 July after the service votes had been counted. Nevertheless, mutterings in the press that the result was not so clear cut commenced from mid-July. The 'London Letter' column in *The Scotsman* noted that since the first polling day, the government suddenly became reluctant to confirm their earlier predictions of a large majority. This caused speculation about whether the government would have a working majority.<sup>154</sup> There was still very little acknowledgement that the Labour party could win the election, but doubt amongst the Unionists was evidently creeping in. CCO had initially believed that the Unionists may win back the seats of Edinburgh East and Greenock from Labour and only anticipated losing four of the thirteen seats which were marked as potential losses.<sup>155</sup>

These upbeat predications proved to be extremely optimistic as the party only gained one seat, Caithness and Sutherland from the Liberals, plus two extra MPs from the Combined Scottish Universities seat.<sup>156</sup> However, Labour lost zero seats and gained sixteen from other parties.<sup>157</sup> The overall totals showed that the Unionists lost 5.3 per cent of its vote share from 1935, a figure which somewhat belies the fact that it lost eleven seats. The table below shows analysis of general election results without Scotland, carried out by the House of Commons Library. They calculated a 5 per cent difference in votes share for the Unionists in

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<sup>153</sup> *The Scotsman*, 13 July 1945.

<sup>154</sup> *The Scotsman*, 24 July 1945.

<sup>155</sup> CPA, CCO, 4/2/51, revised forecasts for general election, July 1945.

<sup>156</sup> There was one official Unionist candidate and Sir John Anderson was elected as a 'National' Candidate. However, he was closely allied with Churchill and sat with the Unionists in Parliament so I include him as a Unionist.

<sup>157</sup> See Appendix C for full election results.

Scotland compared to the UK as a whole, and a 9 per cent difference in the share of the vote for Labour.<sup>158</sup>

Figure 9

### General Election results for the UK and Scotland, 1945-2010

	United Kingdom		Scotland		RUK	
	Share of seats		Share of seats		Share of seats	
	CON	LAB	CON	LAB	CON	LAB
1945	33%	61%	38%	52%	32%	63%
1950	48%	50%	44%	52%	48%	50%
1951	51%	47%	49%	49%	52%	47%
1955	55%	44%	51%	48%	55%	43%
1959	58%	41%	44%	54%	60%	39%

The results clearly indicate that although Labour won the majority of the vote share, it would be justified in thinking it had performed poorly in comparison to the rest of the UK.

Ewen Cameron considers that there was more apathy displayed towards Labour in Scotland due to its candidates being a rather uninspiring group, most of whom were older long-standing party officials.<sup>159</sup>

The results of the general election in Scotland left no political party satisfied with their performance. Labour's NEC was displeased with what it perceived as a poorer result in Scotland as compared to the rest of the UK. In a speech later that year, Clement Attlee remarked that the Scottish Executive needed to discover why Scotland had not given as

<sup>158</sup> HOC Library, general election results without Scotland, Part 1: 1945-2010.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/general-elections-without-scotland-part-1-1945-2010/> accessed 01-12-2020.

<sup>159</sup> Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, p. 193.

strong a performance as expected.<sup>160</sup> As Harvie's analysis has shown, to equal its performance in England, Labour would have needed to win 46 seats out of 74 rather than the 37 it had actually won. Turnout in Scotland was also slightly lower at 69 per cent, with the UK average at 72.8 per cent. In Glasgow where Labour again did worse than expected, turnout was only 64 per cent.<sup>161</sup> There were many near misses in Glasgow seats where the Unionists managed to win by narrow victories, but the failure of Labour to capture more seats can be traced to the fact that Glasgow City Council had been in Labour hands since 1933. In the same way that the Unionists were dismissed from office for a fresh government, the voters of Glasgow had already experienced a long period of Labour rule.

There were three separate sets of corruption trials which involved senior Labour councillors in 1941 which may have soured the electorate's appetite for more of the same.<sup>162</sup> With local council elections being suspended for the duration of the war, there was no ability to change representation as the vacancies arising from the removal of those councillors would have been filled by the Labour Party. As the *Glasgow Herald* commented, restoring public trust in the council and councillors would be 'a difficult and invidious task.'<sup>163</sup> Councillors from the progressive group made up from Unionists, Liberals and independents argued that Glasgow Council was run by a one party group which had politicised local government, and that the citizens of Glasgow were displaying much apathy towards municipal affairs which was only likely to continue after the conduct of the accused councillors.<sup>164</sup> The shocking

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<sup>160</sup> Scottish Council of the Labour Party, *Scottish Labour Yearbook for 1946* (Glasgow, 1946).

<sup>161</sup> Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland', p. 941.

<sup>162</sup> LPA, NEC Files 1941, elections subcommittee 15 Oct. 1941. John Taylor, Scottish organizer, memorandum to the national agent on the present position of the Labour Movement in Glasgow. The trials were reported in *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 26 August 1941, *Glasgow Herald*, 27 August 1941 and 25 September 1941, *Aberdeen Journal*, 24 September 1941. For more on the details of the trials and aftermath see, Peter Jones, *From Virtue to Venality: Corruption in the City*, (Manchester, 2013) pp. 54-73.

<sup>163</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 26 September 1941.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

events forced the council chairman to propose a series of reforms to prevent corruption occurring in the future. Yet the Labour run council stopped short of allowing a full public inquiry, a move which was condemned widely by the press and some members of the public.<sup>165</sup> However, it was not enough with letters from *Glasgow Herald* readers demanding a coalition council be formed to prevent any future issues.<sup>166</sup> It is likely that when normal electioneering resumed, there would perhaps be a reticence from the Glasgow electorate to vote Labour as a result of these controversies.

While the Unionists were relieved that the terrible loss of seats experienced in England did not befall it in Scotland, there was still much soul searching from the party on the reasons why it performed badly. The blame was shifted to the electoral truce and wartime conditions, but the Unionists manifesto could not compete with Labour's bold offering which was so popular with the electorate. The Unionists may have achieved a better result if more references to Scottish and local problems were included in its election literature. Voters were less inclined to relate to Churchill's jingoistic proclamations of national unity. A Mass Observation survey conducted during the war had shown that areas of Scotland could not relate to the national unity narrative as their experience of wartime conditions differed from England.<sup>167</sup> Labour may not have had the huge success it expected, but the party focused more on issues which mattered to the Scottish electorate such as housing and employment. The Unionists' attempts to circumvent the problems the truce had caused the party's wartime organisation were mostly amended by the election. Indeed, by 1948, it only had two more organisers than it had in 1945.<sup>168</sup> As Thorpe has noted, there was a collective

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<sup>165</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 28, 30 & 31 October 1941,

<sup>166</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 27 September 1941 and *The Evening Telegraph*, 27 October 1941.

<sup>167</sup> MO File Report No. 600, p. 6.

<sup>168</sup> NLS, Acc.10424/34, minutes of meeting of the SCUA Western Divisional Council, 6 February 1948.

consensus established in the aftermath of 1945 across the Conservative and Unionist party that it had placed country before party by abiding to restrictive version of the truce, irrespective of the lived experience of individual party members.<sup>169</sup> The electoral truce went from being a noose around the Unionists' neck to a convenient scapegoat in the aftermath of 1945.

If any party had organisational issues ahead of the election it was Labour, with the events of the 1930s undermining its organisation. By the outbreak of war some of the damage had been rectified by Woodburn, but his return to parliament certainly did not help Scottish Labour's organisation. It was an astonishing feat for Labour to achieve what it did in Scotland irrespective of the organisational issues. As Catriona MacDonald has also noted, Labour in the inter-war period managed to do well in by-elections despite the fact that the Labour organisation was poor at grass-roots level.<sup>170</sup> This can also apply to 1945 as the party was scarcely in a better state of organisation by 1945 than it had been in 1935. For all the party's pretensions at being centrally organised and managerial, the reality of Labour in Scotland was the opposite. It was the party policy and the mood of the times which assisted its success rather than the organisational machine. How far the Communists' aided the party in Scotland is truly impossible to quantify. However, the evidence discussed earlier notes that, in terms of grassroots organisation, selling election literature and helping canvass, this assistance may have won some west of Scotland seats from the Unionists. Labour was sorely lacking the personnel and organisation to perform these basic electoral tasks, yet the Communists excelled in those areas. The co-operation between the parties in

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<sup>169</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, pp. 283-5.

<sup>170</sup> MacDonald, 'Scottish Labour', pp. 33-44.

Scotland was closer than in England. Despite the NEC insisting that the Communists' help should not be accepted, the reality of electioneering needs took priority.

The Communist party was so focused on gaining affiliation, it aided Labour at the expense of its own campaign. The Communists hoped to convince Labour through aid and co-operation in the election that it could be admitted safely to the fold. The Communists failed to capitalise on its increased membership in Scotland during the war and pinned the party's future hopes on Labour. The final results saw the party retain its only Scottish MP but did not make the hoped-for gains elsewhere.

For the other minor parties, contrasting circumstances prevailed. The war years had not been kind to the ILP with the party policy of pacifism seeing it relegated to the very fringes of politics. Despite contesting by-elections, the party lost its way in the increasingly crowded left-side of the political spectrum in Scotland. By the next general election in 1950, the ILP was gone, and the remaining Scottish MPs re-joined Labour. For the SNP, the general election was a disappointment as it was unable to hold on to the hard-won seat of Motherwell, which the party had retained for only two months. Yet the war had been an opportunity for the party to restructure and redefine its objectives. The departure of the moderates saw the SNP focus on the centre-left of the spectrum with an independent Scotland as its eventual aim. Gone was endless vacillation between home rule, federalism or cross-party solutions, which overall helped it gain support. While the party believed it was finally making progress, the general election cruelly dashed that dream and indicated that wartime politics was far from the ordinary. The concerns of peace-time politics would have a very different focus.

Ultimately, all political parties, regardless of their pre-war conditions, struggled during the 1945 election campaign to ensure their constituency organisations were in sufficient readiness to fight the election. All parties faced similar issues; that wartime conditions had eroded its membership, lost them experienced organisers and lack of political activity had put all parties out of practice in planning campaigns. The impact of the electoral truce during the war years on party activity was prevalent in the difficulties all parties faced with restarting their electoral machinery. Minor parties suffered more acutely in all these areas than the larger parties, as losing capable organisers and committed members put the parties at risk of complete collapse. The fact that these minor parties had contested by-elections during the war did not aid campaigns as being forced to run candidates in multiple seats was far more difficult than focusing attention on one seat. In Scotland, these issues were even more acute given the autonomy of most political parties' branches. But ultimately, the major decisions were taken at party headquarters in England. From the major to the minor parties, the theme of neglect and lack of interest centrally in the activities of the Scottish branches was present across the board.

This lack of interest had both positive and negative effects, one positive was that some election literature and planning could be organised in the way that best suited the constituency. It did allow some local and personal appeals to be added to any generic literature and campaign organisation. The negative effect was embodied by Labour's experience showing that when little attention was paid to campaign planning, things could quickly become negligent. The Unionists had the problem of CCO focusing the campaign on Churchill and not allowing as much emphasis on local matters. In the aftermath of the election, the Unionists tried to blame organisational difficulties for the result, but it had managed to resolve the major issues of organisation caused by the both the war and the

truce. The party's error was that its campaign was unfortunately against the prevailing mood of the times. The fact that the Unionists did better in the election and managed to maintain its organisation to a greater extent than many of its English counterparts was no coincidence. Preserving a nucleus organisation for the duration of the war allowed the Unionists to begin election preparations far sooner. The questions they had directed at CCO from 1942 about reviving political activity also helped the Scottish Unionists to maintain the functional purpose of their organisations. The historic problems Labour and the Liberals experienced both before and during the war in maintaining their organisations did not help in the election campaign. Without sufficient press support both parties struggled to make their cases. Having the support of the majority of the press also allowed the Unionists to emphasise its policy and to push the national vote Churchill agenda. As Thorpe neatly concluded, 'the electoral disaster that greeted the Conservatives in July 1945 was primarily about politics, not organisation'.<sup>171</sup> Yet for Labour in Scotland its electoral problems in Scotland was due to organisation not politics.

The general election of 1945 showed that despite Scotland experiencing an interwar flirtation with radical politics, it did not continue that heritage by handing Labour a landslide victory. Cities like Glasgow had already experienced many years of Labour-dominated local council administrations and after the various councillor corruption scandals of 1941 were likely little enthused by the prospect of more of the same. Labour's poor organisations in more rural areas of Scotland meant the enthusiastic campaigning seen in the south of the country did not materialise.<sup>172</sup> A greater sense of apathy towards politics was evidenced by the lower turnout in Scotland. The contentious atmosphere that had pervaded so many

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<sup>171</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 32.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 217-8.

wartime by-elections had receded in the general election as the return of conventional electoral politics was not greeted with much enthusiasm. Minor parties were relegated to the side-lines as the Unionists and Labour would dominate post-war Scottish politics.

### Conclusion – Six Years is a Very Long Time in Politics

Almost twenty-years after the end of the Second World War in 1964, the Prime Minister Harold Wilson said during a particularly bad week that ‘a week is a long time in politics.’<sup>1</sup> If this is the case, then six years must be considered an eternity.

For only the second time in British political history, an electoral truce preventing the major parties contesting against each other for parliamentary seats was put in place. Local government elections were stopped entirely by legislation and the party-political system was expected to pause due to the national emergency. The decision to enact the electoral truce was taken centrally in Westminster by the party chief whips with little consideration of the political reality they were about to bestow on their constituency organisations. What followed was a battle between the ‘high politics’ aims at the centre of the coalition parties to manage political tensions and to keep the coalition government in operation, while the ‘low politics’ at local grassroots level struggled to understand and translate the new expectations the truce created in managing party activity. When local parties defied the truce, as occurred at the Pollok by-election, the local Labour party argued against the impact of the truce on their CLP and they were unable to see the impact that this had centrally. Meanwhile the NEC of the Labour party were infuriated at the difficulties Pollok CLP had created, but without understanding how disgruntled localities were with the truce. Neither side could clearly understand the other’s perspective which led to tensions between local and national politics.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the quote attributed to Harold Wilson, c.1964, see [Misquotation: ‘A week is a long time in politics, OUP Academic](#). Accessed 21-06-2021.

Local and regional politics are so often the poor maligned cousin to Westminster politics, where the Punch and Judy dramas centred in the Commons chamber are seen as far more important and exciting than the sedate world of whist drives, charity fundraisers and petty disagreements. However, there is much to be gained by examining local politics during the Second World War as this was the front-line of party politics. Without constituency parties diligently attempting to carry on political work even under the most taxing circumstances, those walking the halls of power would not have grassroots members running their local association. Members of parliament are elected to a constituency, and without the constituencies you lose the lifeblood of party-politics. Local politics so often understated and unloved is the backbone of party politics.<sup>2</sup>

This thesis has captured that struggle between the two sides of party politics and has examined the way local party politics in Scotland operated for the duration of the war under the shadow of the truce. While addressing a significant gap in the literature of the historiography of Scottish wartime politics, the focus on the electoral truce has aided a gap in the historiography of British politics to also be addressed. What this thesis has primarily highlighted is that thoroughly examining the electoral truce is able to unlock a fuller understanding of party-political behaviour both in a Scottish and British context. The examination of the truce has taken the work begun by Crowcroft and Thorpe and expanded upon it, to consider what its ever-shifting nature can tell us about the dynamics of wartime politics. Despite being an outwardly simple agreement, the parameters and implications of the truce loomed large over wartime politics, dictating and controlling the operation of political parties and the electoral system. It temporarily halted the democratic process of

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<sup>2</sup> For more on issue of local versus national politics see, Chris Williams, 'One Damn Election After Another': Politics and the Local Dimension, *Family & Community History*, 5 (2002) pp. 111-23.

electioneering in the country. The truce fundamentally changed and shaped politics for the six years it was in operation.

### **A Political Tool**

A crucial factor highlighted by this thesis was that the truce was used by parties, both major and minor, as a political tool which could be moulded to suit the occasion or narrative which prevailed at any given time. The initial shutdown which the truce caused to party-political activity in the first months of the war was understandable. Both the Liberals and Unionists, swept up by patriotic sentiment, did honestly believe it would be best for the nation if politics was temporarily halted. This interpretation was formed by a lack of clear initial communications offered to the Scottish branches of the party which rather left these grassroots members guessing as to what was expected from them. Scottish branches of the main parties tended to be larger and more autonomous regional branches, this was why the thesis focused on the difficulties they faced with interpreting the truce, as it articulated the struggle between local and national party politics.

Local parties also faced additional restrictions on ordinary party pursuits due to the implementation of the Emergency Powers Act which placed curbs on many activities, including holding political meetings. The confusion was further compounded by the Local Area Committees set up by the MOI, which comprised of members from across the parties and were required to be politically neutral. The simultaneous nature of these regulations coupled with a lack of clear guidance centrally, meant that many constituency parties believed it was the electoral truce which demanded these rules to be in place. As a result, there was a lack of understanding regarding what activity was permitted for several years. When more clarity was eventually offered to constituency parties, their moribund status

had caused an inevitable decline leaving difficulties in political engagement.

The longer the misinterpretation of the truce was allowed to manifest by party officials, the more the press reported these falsehoods, thus creating a 'the spirit of the truce' mood as an unspoken restraint on political behaviour. Initially the way the truce was interpreted was with good, if ultimately mistaken intentions, and resulted from parties believing restrictions were necessary during the early months of war. The anomaly to this was the Labour party, until entering the coalition, regularly reiterated to the rank and file that the truce was not a 'political' or 'party' truce, but purely 'electoral'. Labour played its own political game which was to maintain party activity and not be succoured into a coalition with the Chamberlain government.

However, after the Churchill coalition was formed, there was far more at stake for all the parties who were engaged in the truce, now maintaining both the coalition government and the truce was crucial to the governance of the country. The cost to this aim was the further erosion of political activity at constituency level. The coalition agreement and the later by-election 'coupon' statement bound the parties ever closer together. The coalition parties were now in conflict not with each other, but with their grassroots members who were beginning to question and push back against the restrictive nature which had been applied to the 'truce'. This was where the truce really began to be wielded as a political tool to reign in the localities. The truce became a useful scapegoat to blame for issues which were actually long-term inefficiencies in political parties, mainly difficulties with stimulating party engagement. Rather than tackle these issues, the truce was seen as a useful excuse. The misuse of the truce was in many ways a key component of its operational use. By not being explicit to local parties about what they were allowed to do, the truce impeded party activity, a function the original agreement was never designed to do.

The thesis highlighted another important factor which has not been considered by other historians, that the different terminology used to describe the truce added another layer of misperception to the way it operated. It was noted throughout the first two chapters that alternative names were applied to the truce from its conception. It is arguable that this was initially accidental, after all the truce in the First World War had also been called different names throughout its lifespan.<sup>3</sup> However, the continuance of this practice for the duration of the war, even after local party members questioned the terminology, does suggest that these misnomers were no longer accidental utterances. This led to the truce being referred to by distinct names by different parties which did alter expectations of behaviour. The Unionists and Liberals almost always referred to the truce as 'party' or 'political' which moulded expectations of behaviour. This evolution of language around the truce hinted that the terms also related to party-political activities, and conveyed the impression that those activities were curtailed. As Labour mainly referred to the truce as 'electoral', political messaging around the expectations was far clearer. Much as other areas of life in the Second World War were controlled by strict propaganda and certain expectations of behaviour, the many conflated versions of the truce as 'political' or 'party' became the framework by which political behaviour was expected to operate within.

Thus, the electoral truce is a crucial factor in understanding wartime politics and in particular the way it was used as a political tool. The impact it had on party organisation and engagement meant that normal peacetime electoral activity, such as by-elections, were

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<sup>3</sup> *The Scotsman*, 3 February 1915, and the truce was referred to as 'parliamentary' by Lord Lansdowne during a debate. House of Lords Debates, Fifth Series, (*Hansard*), 2 February 1915, Vol. 18, cols 413-20.

expected to conform within the confines of the truce. Indeed, the whole purpose of the truce was to decrease the likelihood of any political contest at all.

### **By-elections and Party Politics**

By agreeing to the electoral truce, the main parties had anticipated that most by-elections would be uncontested. It is possible they believed minor parties would comply with the political consensus the truce had created and that wartime conditions may well weaken these parties' abilities to offer much of a challenge. The fact that local elections were prevented by legislation because they were unable to be easily controlled under the party system demonstrated an effort to reign in any outlets for political controversy. This was why consideration of the way the truce operated in Scotland was a crucial feature of this thesis, as there existed three minor parties which had a greater ability to mobilise and still operate as political parties than in the rest of Britain.

The result was that minor political parties and individuals pushed back against an electoral system which had limited potential for democratic engagement. This was the reason for the examination of by-elections in the thesis as it allowed for the gauging of information about electoral activity, albeit in an unusual environment. Without by-elections there would have been very little engagement in politics for either the constituency branches of the major and minor parties, or for the public to participate in the political process for the duration of the war. By-elections were also a chance for beleaguered party operations to be briefly reinstated for the purpose of fighting the by-election. While the main parties often grumbled about the candidates as disturbers of national unity or other such sentiments, it did allow that brief outlet of political activity for the Unionists and Labour. The fact that the Liberals were never required to contest a by-election was evident in their 1945 general

election performance. They had simply allowed their party machinery to wither away in the war years, complacent that it could be reformed again when the call came to abandon the truce.

The thesis offered a comparison between nine carefully selected Scottish by-elections and a hypothesis developed by Addison, which examined the reasons and policies non-government candidates used to contest by-elections through the war years, to tease out the differences in the operation of Scottish and British politics. It was discovered that Scotland diverged from the model in two out of the three areas, with Scotland abandoning purely pacifist campaigns earlier than England. Instead by-election candidates directed their attention towards the truce, as seen at Argyll in April 1940, contesting a by-election against the truce was a method of registering discontent with the way politics was now operating. The notion of a 'democratic deficit' in Scotland where localities and minor parties felt psychologically excluded from the decision-making process was the driver of these early challenges against the electoral truce. It was almost another two years before this occurred in England with the emergence of Common Wealth candidates. Realistically, by-election results were unlikely to change much due to the way parliamentary sovereignty actually functioned.<sup>4</sup> But, in a situation where any other form of challenging the status quo was impossible, the political symbolism of a by-election; the act of electing a representative to the parliament where decisions were made, allowed an element of political participation to the localities which the truce had prevented.

One of the more striking discoveries was that greater disenchantment towards the coalition was more evident in some areas of Scotland. The minor parties in Scotland were more anti-

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<sup>4</sup> See A.V Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, (London, 1979), pp. 39-86.

coalition than independent and Common Wealth candidates in England, who painted Conservatism as the bogeyman, and purveyor of all national problems. Instead there was a prevalence for candidates being disgruntled with Labour for joining the coalition and was a factor in the higher number of contested by-election. The ILP, SNP and Communists (prior to June 1941), had made it their business to contest against the coalition government regardless of the party the candidate represented. It is a normal occurrence in peacetime by-elections for the party in government to lose seats as the electorate react to its policy decisions or are simply fatigued with one particular party.<sup>5</sup> It was inevitable that some correction of the political balance sheet would occur during the war. With the coalition representing most of the political parties, the public would inevitably have to turn towards individuals or minor parties as the only options against the political status quo. This showed how important Scottish minor parties became as political actors during this period, they held far more power and influence than in peacetime when the might of larger parties overshadowed minor parties significantly. Further evidence of this increase in minor parties' political influence were the SNP's bargaining tactics at the Dunbartonshire and Cathcart by-elections. The SNP tried to manipulate Labour to support its post-war plebiscite on self-government in return for not entering a candidate in the elections. There was no similar display of behaviour in England because of the specific self-government aims of the SNP. This behaviour was an insight not only into the politicking that occurred in Scotland during the middle war years, but that Scottish political concerns had a distinctive difference to

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed explanation of the various reason's governments lose by-elections see, Anthony Mughan, 'Toward A Political Explanation of Government Vote Losses in Midterm By-elections' *The American Political Science Review*, 80 (1986), pp. 761-775.

England. The lack of independent candidates in Scotland for the duration of the war showed the important role minor parties were increasingly playing in the game of party politics.

This is an example of where this thesis has highlighted an important difference in Scottish and British wartime patterns. While the rest of the UK was riding high on a wave of Common Wealth popularity and the shocking defeat of Conservative coalition candidates by progressive liberals, in Scotland the Common Wealth party were nowhere to be found.

Aside from an appearance at the 1943 North Midlothian by-election, the party rescinded south to focus its strength on toppling Conservatives. Instead there was the SNP with its new by-election policy and a determination to contest as many as possible. This meant that the narrative in by-elections for the final two years of the war differed to the agenda of the Common Wealth party. The SNP tied a style of socialism to nationalism resulting in a policy which dominated the final two by-elections of Kirkcaldy and Motherwell. This signalled to the government that the Scottish issues which were secondary to the anti-truce and anti-government statements in earlier by-elections had the potential to entice voters to the party cause.

At Kirkcaldy the SNP shifted its policy aims towards a more local perspective, giving a voice to the community which wartime controls had somewhat stifled. By focusing on local issues, the SNP was able to claim that it was standing up for Scotland. This was something which the main parties were less able to focus on due to the requirements of the coalition and the electoral truce. The SNP was able to place itself firmly against the political status quo and argue for change along similar lines to the independent and Common Wealth candidates in the rest of the UK; but the all-important difference was the Scottish perspective.

Motherwell was therefore the culmination of several factors which allowed the SNP a late victory. The narrative the party began at Argyll in 1940 was that the truce was democratically unfair – particularly to Scottish political parties who had no say in the formation of the agreement. This was a sentiment which resonated and was used by the minor parties as a valid reason to enter by-elections. There was also the psychological mentality within these minor parties to consider, particularly the SNP which objected to the control exerted by the central Westminster government. It was a conscious strategy on the SNP's part, using that grievance to exploit underlining feelings of neglect. Indeed, a notable theme which emerged in later by-elections was that the candidate needed to ensure their campaign was very Scotland-centric and addressed the psychological sense of a democratic deficit. This sentiment survived into the post-war era and was used as the *modus operandi* by several political parties from the SNP to the Unionists as a central plank to their Scottish policy. Indeed, the Unionists' post-war emphasis on decentralisation and Scottish localism stemmed directly from its experiences with the truce and coalition during the war, with the general election result leading to the party in Scotland reframing its ideas.<sup>6</sup>

What became apparent with the examination of Scottish by-elections was the conclusion offered by Thorpe was indeed correct, he maintained that the concept of party 'emerged [from the war] stronger not weaker.'<sup>7</sup> At certain periods of the war it could have arguably been the opposite, with party activity under threat by the truce. There was no doubt it did shake party politics at a fundamental level. Where the conclusions of this thesis differ from

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<sup>6</sup> "'We Like Local Patriotism": The Conservative Party and the Discourse of Decentralisation, 1947-51." *English Historical Review*, 122 (2007), pp. 965-85. Matthew Cragoe, 'Defending the Constitution: The Conservative Party and the Idea of Devolution, 1945-74,' in Andrew Edwards and Chris Williams (eds.) *The Art of the Possible: Politics and Governance in Modern British History, 1885-1997: Essays in Memory of Duncan Tanner* (Manchester, 2015) pp. 162-187 and Torrance, *Standing up for Scotland*, pp. 48-95.

<sup>7</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*, p. 288.

Thorpe's work is the greater emphasis placed on the role of the truce. While Thorpe considered the truce, his focus was on the core operational structure of party politics. His work offered a valuable widespread survey of party politics from national to local level and even the way political parties were funded and run. His work has created a strong foundation for understanding party politics during the war, but there were still unexplored avenues in relation to the truce. This thesis has laid a greater emphasis on the truce because of its crucial role in directing the operational scope of political parties. It marries together the aspects that Thorpe raised about the ultimate resilience of party politics and looked carefully at the way the truce challenged this.

While political parties across the spectrum were restricted both by war-related problems and the self-inflicted problems from the truce, party politics as a system was not about to disappear. The threat posed by the truce to political party activity was real and has been shown throughout the thesis to have had widespread consequences. Activity may have declined or stopped entirely, but the institution did not evaporate. Much of this relied on the very entities which were most under threat by the truce, local parties.

What was evident from the records of constituency parties across the board was the commitment these grassroots members gave to the cause. Many were eager to maintain the purpose that parties were set up for, to continue political activity, to have dynamic engaged members and to forward their political message. While war conditions caused many issues from a lack of personnel, premises and even time to dedicate to the cause, determination to carry on prevailed amongst the grassroots members. This was why the truce was such a crucial factor. Constituency parties did not want to cause controversy by defying the expectations handed to them by their central party management, but they were on the political front line and could see the huge potential damage the truce could cause to

their operations. An example was the pleas from the SLF for the truce to be debated at their national conference for several years. The plea was continually rebuffed by Sinclair and LPO because they knew it risked the integrity of the coalition if the truce was challenged, showing the tensions in priorities between the local and national. There was a sense of distance to political reality shown by the leaders of the coalition parties, far more concerned with ensuring localities abided by the truce to smooth over inter-party relations at their own level.

The lack of understanding displayed by these officials to the issues Scottish parties were raising exposed the disconnect between regions and the centre. Scotland had a far larger portion of MPs than Wales and Northern Ireland combined and were the largest regional branches of political parties, and under normal peacetime conditions had a fair amount of autonomy. There was a sense of rancour with the situation created by the truce, where the decisions that affected localities were centrally taken and the Scottish branches were left to apply decisions to their constituency areas whether these would be suitable or not. The demands made by the coalition that local parties co-operate with what would be their political rivals in peacetime were hardly popular in any part of the country. However, relations were particularly fraught in many areas of Scotland due to the way the filling of local council vacancies had occurred.<sup>8</sup> There was too much animosity for peaceful co-operation.

Minor parties were especially eager to take the chance the truce offered them to contest seats as often the only opposition to the government and allowed them a broader platform for their message. While parties like the Communists turned this into increased

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<sup>8</sup> *Aberdeen press and Journal*, 11 December 1940.

membership, it was sadly the decision from the central party to follow the letter of the truce which shut down a promising revival in 1941. The party never recovered falling further into decline after 1945 when Labour's reformist programme side-lined the party into obscurity.

While Thorpe displayed the resilience of mainstream party politics despite all the odds, this was not the case with minor party politics which suffered acute damage. From the high point of the war where minor parties had the attention and ability to grab headlines like never before, to the emergence of what appeared to be an exciting new political force in the form of the Common Wealth party, it all amounted to nothing. The end of the truce and coalition saw the major parties roar back to life, eager to resume political contest after such a long period of coalition, and prior to this National Government. The huge issues facing post-war Britain from health to housing were too large for the minor parties to even begin to formulate electable policies to tackle. The larger parties had the resources and ability to tackle these key issues. The war while bringing much needed publicity had weakened the finances and general functionality of minor parties and they struggled with maintaining membership. The general obscurity of minor parties in normal peacetime elections all brought challenges which they were unable to surmount.

But what this thesis has highlighted is that despite the fate eventually suffered by minor party in the post-war era, they were crucial in keeping a sense of party-political contest alive in Scotland during the war which was sorely needed to prevent electoral politics descending completely into stasis. The fact that eventually a minor party stepped into the electoral fray in England showed that party politics was a crucial factor in the democratic electoral system.

## The '45

The effect of the truce on party-political activity in Scotland was evident at the 1945 general election after such a prolonged period of restrictions on party operations for almost six years. When parties needed to plan election campaigns, they faced a serious challenge in readying their electoral machinery because of how much the truce had interfered with political activity in constituency parties over the course of the war. Aside from Thorpe and Harvie, detailed consideration of all the parties' organisational planning for the election was missing in the literature.<sup>9</sup> The chapter built upon the earlier arguments made in the thesis and particularly showed the ripple effect the electoral truce had caused for political parties to prepare for the campaign ahead. The SCUA's Western and Eastern Divisional councils, with the regular questioning of the truce and continual meetings throughout the war, had aided the party in Scotland to maintain some semblance of normal activity. The increased concern displayed after 1942 about the stagnating effect of the truce led to the organisation increasing its political activity. While the Unionists did better in planning and preparing its organisations for the election, it made a major error in judgement with regards to the policy content of the election campaign. The party acquiesced to the central campaign narrative which focused on Churchill and great sacrifices for national unity that the party had made for the country. However, the lack of emphasis on Scottish policy was an error in judgement with the campaign focusing too heavily on Churchill, whereas a majority of Labour MPs backed some form of Scottish devolution in their election literature. The Scottish press tried their best to push the Unionists' agenda, *The Scotsman* in particular playing its part in promoting the Unionists' campaign in every issue. They undermined Labour at every

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<sup>9</sup> Thorpe, *Parties at War*. Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland'.

opportunity by talking down their chances, even for longstanding and well-regarded candidates.

The thesis sought to explain the reasons for a reversal in fortunes experienced by the Unionists and Labour in Scotland, a question which thus far in the literature few aside from Harvie have sought to answer.<sup>10</sup> One of the main reasons was due to the Unionists being more organised in looking ahead to with regards to general election planning. The continual questioning of the wisdom of CCO's decisions relating to party activity by the SCUA from 1942 onwards, meant the Unionists rather took the initiative and began to resume more political activity. The early preparations for the general election carried out by the Unionists over the course of 1944 assisted the party in recovering its constituency presence. Labour's well organised NEC struggled to translate plans to Scotland due to the long-term organisational problems the party faced. As shown in the final chapter, Labour's approach in Scotland was fairly haphazard without much central control. The impact of the pre-war difficulties Labour experienced were a pertinent concern as it had not sufficiently recovered. The further decline of the party machinery was discussed throughout the thesis as a recurring problem. The truce was also a factor in Labour's Scottish decline as many CLPs did reduce or cut back entirely on meetings for the duration of the war. This difference in organisational planning did ultimately translate into poorer results for Labour in Scotland as the scale of victory was not as vast as its landslide result south of the border. That is not to diminish the fact that the party won 37 out of 74 seats, an impressive victory, but nothing close to that which was hoped for. As noted throughout chapter five, one of the primary reasons for the poorer result in Scotland was due to the party's difficulties in ensuring the

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<sup>10</sup> Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland'.

constituency Labour parties across Scotland had accrued an effective campaign machine. Labour was fortunate that the Communist party stepped in and aided its ailing campaign, especially in the west of Scotland where the party struggled with personnel difficulties.

The story of the Scottish Liberals was one of decline and fall. Its organisational machine had been especially affected by the party's intense obedience of the electoral truce resulting in the almost complete shutdown of its constituency parties. The Liberals banked on its past successes in certain areas of Scotland and the popularity of Beveridge to help revive its ailing party. Yet, it waited too long to claim autonomy over Beveridge. Labour had already gained association with the bulk of his ideas by its eager embrace of the NHS and full employment in its manifesto. The local organisations could not be stirred to action even during 1945 with the election imminent. The party had not contended a by-election during the war so was at the greatest disadvantage of almost all parties in Scotland, as even the minor parties had been able to exercise their electoral machinery. The Liberals lack of practice with all aspects of campaigning showed in the low number of seats contested, and the eventual loss of all its Scottish MPs. The 1945 general election was a watershed moment for the party, the growth of the Labour movement in the interwar period had supplanted Liberal Scotland. The war years and its lack of political engagement pushed the party to rethink and reform its operations post-war.<sup>11</sup> The truce, it could be argued, was used by the Liberals as a scapegoat for a lack of political activity by blaming its existence for an inability to reform the party's organisation. However, the party had difficulties before 1939, if anything the war hastened an already terminal decline. The deterioration of all forms of

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<sup>11</sup> Malcolm Petrie, 'Anti-socialism, Liberalism and Individualism: Rethinking the Realignment of Scottish Politics, 1945–1970', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 28 (2018) pp. 197-217. David Torrance, 'Standing up for Scotland': *Nationalist Unionism and Scottish Party Politics, 1884-2014* (Edinburgh, 2020), at pp. 96-120.

Liberalism was evident in 1945, with the Liberal Nationals losing four seats despite being allied with the Unionists. Both branches of the Liberal party had been inactive politically during the war as a result of the strict adherence to law and letter of the electoral truce. Their complete lack of by-election contests and any involvement in political activity resulted in its destruction in 1945 and changed the landscape of Scottish politics until the 1960s with Labour and the Unionists engaging in a two-party hegemony.

There have been areas which this thesis was unable to explore fully and would point to areas for future research. The impact of the legislation passed preventing local government elections for the duration of the war is one area which requires more consideration. There was not the space or ability to dedicate more to this topic as the focus was on constituency parties. The various differences between municipal and parliamentary elections during this era were more distinct and it requires a more dedicated detailed study. The other area indicated in the thesis for further research was the similarities and differences between the formation of the truce and coalition government in the two world wars. A detailed comparison regarding the issues which were also experienced around the terminology of the truce during the First World War would offer excellent scope for exploring this subject area. There is little comparison between the wars and the way they have been interpreted, as Kenneth O Morgan noted in 1996, the way we think about the two world wars may well be in need of an update.<sup>12</sup> He also observed it would be beneficial to conduct more research into the effect of both wars in Wales and Northern Ireland.<sup>13</sup> In addition, similar research into the ways Welsh and Northern Irish parties dealt with the truce restrictions may well

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<sup>12</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, "England, Britain and the audit of war." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6th series. 7, (1997) pp. 131-53.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

add another side to the tale of the truce. An-depth examination of the state of politics in both countries may also offer some illuminating conclusions and would build a true UK picture of wartime politics. A multi-national study was not possible to conduct within the thesis as the Scottish aspects alone were difficult to contain in one study.

At a fundamental level, wartime politics was the politics of the truce. For six years conventional party politics was subdued to the demands of the truce, an agreement which consisted of two numbered parts and was fewer than 75 words in length. Layers of inference and expectation were piled onto this short agreement over the years until it in many ways took on a form of its own. It is as much responsible for the dynamics of wartime politics as was the extension of parliament bill or the coalition agreement. This thesis has highlighted how crucial this agreement was for the operation of wartime politics, and far more importance needs to be placed on its role in creating the framework in which wartime political activity occurred. If one wonders why party politics in wartime took the form that it did, the electoral truce should arguably be considered the central factor.

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**Appendix A – All Contested By-elections in the UK during Second World War.**

**Scotland**

Argyll, 10/04/1940.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>
D. McCallum	Unionist	12,317	62.8	41,005	47.9
W. Power	SNP	7,308	37.2		

Clackmannan and East Stirlingshire, 13/10/1939.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>
A. Woodburn	Labour	15,645	93.7	47,237	35.4
A. Stewart	Independent Pacifist	1,060	6.3	Deposit Lost	

Dunbartonshire, 27/02/1941.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>
A.S. MacKinlay	Labour	21,900	85	66,510	38.7
M. MacEwen	Communist	3,862	15		

East Renfrewshire, 09/05/1940.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>
E.G.R. Lloyd	Unionist	34,316	80.7	98,083	43.4
Miss A. Maxton	ILP	8,206	19.3		

Edinburgh Central, 11/12/1941.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>
F.C. Watt	Unionist	4,771	71	33,641	22
T. Taylor	ILP	1,950	29		

Glasgow Cathcart, 28/04/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
F. Beattie	Unionist	10,786	59.7	46,239	39.1
Hon. W. Douglas-Home	Independent Progressive	3,807	21		
J. Carmichael	ILP	2,493	13.8		
W. Whyte	Independent Scottish Nationalist	1,000	5.5	Deposit Lost	

Glasgow Pollock, 30/04/1940.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
T.D. Galbraith	Unionist	17,850	88.1	45,518	44.5
J. Nicholson	Independent Labour	2,401	11.9	Deposit lost	

Hamilton, 29/01/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
T. Fraser	Labour	10,725	81.1	35,934	36.8
J. Lethem	Independent	2,505	18.9		

Kirkcaldy Burghs, 17/02/1944.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
T.F. Hubbard	Labour	8,268	51.6	43,030	37.2
D.C.C. Young	SNP	5,811	41.3		
H. Hilditch	Christian Socialist	1,136	7.1	Deposit Lost	

Motherwell, 12/04/1945.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
Dr. R.D. McIntyre	SNP	11,417	51.4	41,180	54
A. Anderson	Labour	10,800	48.6		

North Midlothian and Peeblesshire, 11/12/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
Sir T.D.K. Murray	Unionist	11,620	51.9	64,626	34.6
T.H. Wintringham	Common Wealth	10,751	48.1		

### England

Acton, 14/12/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
H.C. Longhurst	Conservative	5,014	60.3	48,663	17.1
W.E. Padley	ILP	2,336	28.1		
Miss D. Crisp	Independent	707	8.5	Deposit Lost	
E. Godfrey	Independent	258	3.1	Deposit Lost	

Ashford, 10/02/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
E.P. Smith	Conservative	9,648	69.7	49,899	27.7
Mrs. C.E. Williamson	Common Wealth	4,192	30.3		

Battersea North, 17/04/1940.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
F.C.R. Douglas	Labour	9,947	92.6	42,725	25.1
E.C. Joyce	Independent	791	7.4	Deposit Lost	

Berwick-upon-Tweed, 17/10/1944.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
Sir W.H. Beveridge	Liberal	8,792	87.4	41,068	24.5
W.D. Clark	Independent	1,269	12.6		

Birmingham Aston, 09/09/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
R.M. Prior	Conservative	6,316	72.5	39,262	22.2
G. Hall	Common Wealth	1,886	21.6		
S.H. Davis	Independent	515	5.9	Deposit Lost	

Birmingham, Kings Norton, 08/05/1941.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
B.A.J. Peto	Conservative	21,573	86.9	70,890	35
Dr. A.W.L. Smith	Independent (pro-aerial bombing Germany)	1,696	6.8	Deposit Lost	
S. Morris	Independent Pacifist (PPU)	1,552	6.3	Deposit lost	

Brighton (2 seats), 03/02/1944.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
L.W.B. Teeling	Conservative	14,594	53.6%	123,310	22.1
B.D. Briant	National Independent	12,635	46.4		

Bury. St. Edmonds, 29/02/1944.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
E.M. Keatinge	Conservative	11,705	56.2	40,971	50.8
Mrs. M.I.C. Ashby	Independent Liberal	9,121	43.8		

Camberwell North, 30/03/1944.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
C.A.G. Manning	Labour	2,655	79.8	29,661	11.2
T.F.R. Disher	Independent	674	20.2		

Chelmsford, 26/04/1945.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
E.R. Millington	Common Wealth	24,548	57.5	78,806	54.1
B.C. Cook	Conservative	18,117	42.5		

Chichester, 18/05/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
Hon. L.W. Joyson-Hicks	Conservative	15,634	58.1	92,222	29.2
G.B. Kidd	Independent	10,564	39.3		
A.A.W. Tribe	Independent Conservative	706	2.6	Deposit lost	

Chippenham, 24/08/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
D.M. Eccles	Conservative	8,310	50.6	39,648	41.4
Dr. D.M. Johnson	Independent Liberal	8,115	49.4		

Clay Cross, 14/04/1944.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
N. Neal	Labour	13,693	76.3	44,535	40.3
P. Hicken	Independent	2,336	13		
Hon. W. Douglas-Home	Independent Progressive	1,911	10.7	Deposit Lost	

Croydon North, 19/06/1940.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
H.U. Willink	Conservative	14,163	90.7%	85,396	18.3
A.L. Lucas	Independent	1,445	9.3	Deposit Lost	

Darwen, 15/12/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
W.R.S. Prescott	Conservative	8,869	50.2	39,229	45
Miss H.C.M. Balfour	Independent Labour	8,799	49.8		

Daventry, 20/04/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
R.E. Manningham-Buller	Conservative	9,043	45.9	40,541	48.7
D.G. Webb	Common Wealth	6,591	33.4		
W.G.E. Dyer	Independent Labour	4,093	20.7		

Derbyshire Western, 17/02/1944.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
C.F. White (Junior)	Independent Labour	16,336	57.7	43,371	65.4
Marquess of Hartingdon	Conservative	11,775	41.5		
R. Goodall	Agricultural	233	0.8	Deposit Lost	

Dudley, 23/07/1941.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
C.E. Lloyd	Conservative	6,234	56.1	31,996	34.7
N.P. Billing	National Independent	4,869	43.9		

Eddisbury, 07/04/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
J.E. Loverseed	Common Wealth/Independent Labour	8,023	43.7	32,715	56.1
T. Peacock	National Liberal	7,537	41		
H. Heathcote-Williams	Independent Labour	2,803	15.3		

Grantham, 25/03/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
W.D. Kendall	Independent	11,758	50.8	54,317	42.6
Sir A.M. Longmore	Conservative	11,391	49.2		

Hampstead, 27/11/1941.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
C. Challen	Conservative	7,630	67.4	65,511	17.3
N.P. Billing	National Independent	2,734	24.1		
W.R. Hipwell	Independent Progressive	636	5.6	Deposit lost	
A.L. Dolland	Independent	326	2.9	Deposit lost	

Harrow, 02/12/1941.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
N.A.H. Bower	Conservative	14,540	80.9	16,8594	10.7
Miss W.C. Henney	Independent Democrat	3,433	19.1		

Hornsey, 28/05/1941.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
L.D. Gammans	Conservative	11,077	72.8	72,298	21.1
N.P. Billing	National Independent	4,196	27.2		

Kettering 06/03/1940.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
J.D. Profumo	Conservative	17,914	73	64,838	37.8
W. Ross	Independent	6,616	27		

King's Lynn, 12/02/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
Lord Fermoy	Conservative	10,696	54.2	49,581	39.8
F.J. Wise	Independent Labour	9,027	45.8		

Lancaster, 15/10/1941.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
F.H.R. Maclean	Conservative	15,783	56.9	66,290	41.9
W.C. Ross	Independent Labour	6,551	23.6		
A.F. Brockway	ILP	5,418	19.5		

Leeds North East, 13/03/1940.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
J.J.C. Henderson	Conservative	23,882	97.1	70,404	34.9
S. Allen	BUF	722	2.9	Deposit Lost	

Maldon, 25/06/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
T.E.N. Driberg	Independent Labour	12,219	61.3	44,887	44.4
R.J. Hunt	Conservative	6,226	31.3		
R.B. Matthews	National Independent & Agricultural	1,476	7.4	Deposit Lost	

Manchester Clayton, 17/10/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
H. Thorneycroft	Labour	8,892	93.3	45,720	20.8
E.H. Foot	Independent	636	6.7	Deposit Lost	

Manchester Rusholme, 08/07/1944.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
F.W. Cundiff	Conservative	8,430	53.3	45,675	53.3
H. Blomerley	Common Wealth	6,670	42.1		
C.J. Taylor	Independent Labour	734	4.6	Deposit Lost	

Middleton and Prestwich, 22/05/1940.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
E.E. Gates	Conservative	32,036	98.7	66,288	49
F. Haslam	BUF	418	1.3	Deposit Lost	

Newcastle-Upon-Tyne North, 07/06/1940.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
Sir C.M. Headlam, Bt.	Independent Conservative	7,380	71.2	47,166	22
H. Grattan-Doyle	Conservative	2,982	28.8		

N.B There was an internal party row over nominations, Headlam was the choice of the association.

Newark, 08/06/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
S. Shepherd	Conservative	10,120	44.2	51,785	44.2
A. Dawrant	Independent Progressive	7,110	31.1		
E.W. Moeran	Common Wealth	3,189	13.9		
J.T. Pepper	Independent Liberal	2,473	10.8	Deposit Lost	

Northampton, 06/12/1940.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
G.S. Summers	Conservative	16,587	93.4	59,267	30
W.S. Seamark	Christian Pacifist	1,167	6.6	Deposit Lost	

Peterborough, 15/10/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
Viscount Suidale	Conservative	11,976	52.4	51,775	44.2
S. Bennett	Independent Labour	10,890	47.6		

Poplar, Bow and Bromley, 12/06/1940.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
C.W. Key	Labour	11,594	95.8	37,324	32.4
Mrs I. Brown	Communist	506	4.2	Deposit lost	

Poplar South, 12/08/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
W.H. Guy	Labour	3,375	86.2	42,034	9.3
Rev. P.H. Figgis	Christian Socialist	541	13.8		

Portsmouth North, 16/02/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
Sir W.M. James	Conservative	6,735	59.7	51,454	21.9
T. Sargant	Common Wealth	4,545	40.3		

Rugby, 29/04/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
W.J. Brown	Independent	9,824	51.8	49,252	38.5
Sir C.V. Holbrook	Conservative	9,145	48.2		

Salisbury, 08/07/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
J.G. Morrison	Con	16,782	67.8	53,583	42
W.R. Hipwell	Independent progressive	3,218	18.1		
J.D. Monro	Independent democrat	2,519	14.1		

Scarborough and Whitby, 24/09/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
A.C.M. Spearman	Conservative	12,518	60.8	57,381	35.9
W.R. Hipwell	Independent Progressive	8,086	39.2		

Skipton, 07/01/1944.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
H.M. Lawson	Common Wealth	12,222	44.9	49,608	54.9
H. Riddiough	Conservative	12,001	44.0		
J. Toole	Independent Labour	3,029	11.1	Deposit Lost	

Stretford, 08/12/1939.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
R.H. Etherton	Conservative	23,408	79.7	80,112	36.6
R. Edwards	ILP	4,424	15.1		
E.A. Gower	Communist	1,519	5.2	Deposit Lost	

Southwark Central 10/02/1940.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
J.H. Martin	Labour	5,285	64.3	33,265	24.7
C.W. Searson	Independent	1,550	18.9		
Mrs. V. Van Der Elst	National Independent	1,382	16.8		

The Hartlepoons, 01/06/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
T.G. Greenwell	Conservative	13,333	64.1	52,794	39.5
Miss E.F. Burton	Common Wealth	3,634	17.4		
O. Lupton	Independent	2,351	11.3	Deposit Lost	
W.R. Hipwell	Independent Progressive	1,510	7.2	Deposit Lost	

The Wrekin, 26/09/1941.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
W.A. Colegate	Conservative	9,946	53.1	46,156	40.5
N.P. Billing	National Independent	7,121	38.1		
A.P. Kennedy	Independent	1,638	8.8	Deposit Lost	

Wallasey, 29/04/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
G.L. Reakes	Independent	12,595	60.6	60,684	34.2
J. Pennington	Conservative	6,584	31.7		
Hon. L.H. Cripps	Independent	1,597	7.7	Deposit Lost	

Wandsworth Putney, 08/05/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
H.N. Linstead	Conservative	8,788	74.9	51,066	23
B. Acworth	Independent	2,939	25.1		

Watford, 23/02/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
W. Helmore	Conservative	13,839	53.9	79,228	32.4
A.R. Blackmore	Common Wealth	11,838	46.1		

West Ham Silvertown 22/02/1940

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
J.H. Hollins	Labour	14,343	92.8	38,575	40.1
H. Pollitt	Communist	966	6.2	Deposit Lost	
T.P. Moran	BUF	151	1	Deposit Lost	

Windsor, 30/06/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
C.E. Mott-Radclyffe	Conservative	9,557	58.4%	58,726	27.9
Hon. W. Douglas-Home	Independent Progressive	6,817	41.6		

Wolverhampton Bilston, 20/09/1944.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
W.E. Gibbons	Conservative	9,693	50.9%	58,423	32.6
A. Eaton	ILP	9,344	49.1		

Woolwich West, 10/11/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
F.W. Beech	Conservative	8,204	65.2	60,400	20.8
W.T. Colyer	ILP	3,419	27.2		
L.J. Ellis	Independent	958	7.6	Deposit Lost	

### Wales

Caernarvon, 26/04/1945.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
D.R.S. Davies	Labour	20,754	75.2	46,910	58.8
Prof. J.E. Daniel	Plaid Cymru	6,844	24.8		

Cardiff East, 13/04/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
Rt. Hon. Sir. P.J. Grigg	National	10,030	75.2	40,254	33.1
A.F. Brockway	ILP	3,311	24.8		

Llandaff and Barry 10/06/1942.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
C.H.A. Lakin	Conservative	19,408	56.8	82,323	41.5
R.W.G. Mackay	Independent Labour	13,753	40.3		
R.M.R. Paton	Independent	975	2.9	Deposit Lost	

Neath, 15/05/1945.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
D.J. Williams	Lab	30,847	79.2	67,083	58
W.I. Samuel	Plaid Cymru	6,290	16.2		
J.R. Haston	Revolutionary Communist Party	1,781	4.6	Deposit lost	

Newport, 17/05/1945.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
R.M. Bell	Conservative	16,424	54.5	60,248	50
R. Edwards	ILP	13,722	45.5		

### Northern Ireland

Antrim, 11/02/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
J. D. Campbell	Conservative	42,371	69.4	135,795	45
R. Getgood	Northern Irish Labour	17,253	28.3		
R.H. Press	Independent Conservative	1,432	2.3	Deposit lost	

Belfast West, 09/02/1943.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %
J. Beattie	Northern Irish Labour	19,936	46.2	78,763	54.8
S.K. Cunningham	Conservative	14,426	33.4		
W.M. Wilton	Independent Conservative	7,551	17.5		
H.C. Corvin	Independent Republican	1,250	2.9	Deposit Lost	

**University Seats**

Cambridge, 19-23/02/1940.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>
Dr. A.V. Hill	Independent Conservative	9,840	64.6	39,171	38.9
Prof. J.A. Ryle	Independent Progressive	5,387	35.4		

Combined Scottish Universities, 09-13/04/1945.

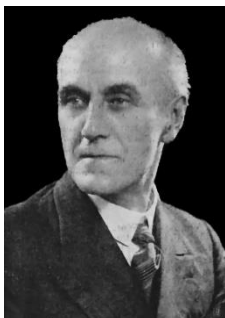
<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>
Sir J. Boyd-Orr	Independent	20,197	71.2	63,581	44.6
R.M. Monro	National Liberal	8,177	28.8		

University of Wales, 25-29-01/1943.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>
Prof. W.J. Gruffydd	Labour	3,098	52.3	11,079	53.4
J.S. Lewis	Plaid Cymru	1,330	22.5		
A.T. Davies	Independent	755	12.8		
E. Davies	Independent Labour	634	10.7	Deposit Lost	
N.L. Evans	Independent Labour	101	1.7	Deposit Lost	

## Appendix B – Biographies of Scottish By-Election Candidates 1939-1945

### **Anderson, Alexander (Alex) (1888-1954)**



**Contested:** Motherwell & Wishaw, April 1945. **Result:** Defeated. **Votes:** 10,800 (48.6%)

**Political Affiliation:** Labour.

Alex Anderson was Labour politician for Motherwell and Wishaw Division from July 1945 until his death in 1954. He had previously been a town councillor for the area from 1929 to 1945. He was originally from Wick and was employed a teacher after studying at the University of Edinburgh. He was soon involved with various early socialist movements. He was defeated by Dr Robert McIntyre in the Motherwell by-election of April 1945, but he won the seat back from McIntyre in the July general election.

### **Beattie, Francis (1885-1945)**



**Contested:** Glasgow Cathcart, 28 April 1942. **Result:** Won. **Votes:** 10,786 (59.6%)

**Political Affiliation:** Unionist.

Francis Beattie was the Unionist MP for the Glasgow Cathcart division from April 1942 until his death in December 1945, after being injured in a motor accident. He was born and educated in Glasgow, obtaining a degree from University of Glasgow. He served in the First World War and was ranked a Brevet-Major when demobbed. He was a master baker and chairman of Beattie Bakeries Ltd.

### **Boyd Orr, John, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Boyd-Orr, styled Sir John Boyd Orr between 1937-1949. (1880-1971).**



**Contested:** Combined Scottish Universities, 9-13 April 1945. **Result:** Won. **Votes:** 20,197 (71.2%)

**Political Affiliation:** Independent.

John Boyd-Orr was a nutritionist, scientist and politician who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1949 for his work. He acted as an advisor to the Ministry of Food during the Second World War. He was born in Ayrshire and attended Glasgow University where he first graduated as a teacher in 1902. He then returned to the University after discovering he disliked teaching, completing his degrees in Biology and Medicine between 1905 and 1914. He was in both the Army and Navy during the First World War within the medical battalions. He helped found the Rowett Research Institute where he conducted much of his ground-breaking research. He resigned from his post as Director in 1945. His political career was brief serving as MP for the Combined Scottish Universities seat between April 1945 and October 1946. He stood as

an independent candidate but supported some degree of self-government for Scotland. His political career was a brief hiatus at the end of a very successful scientific career.

### **Carmichael, James (1894-1966)**



**Contested:** Glasgow Cathcart, 29 April 1942. **Result:** Defeated. **Votes:** 2,493 (13.8%)

**Political Affiliation:** Independent Labour Party.

James Carmichael was born in Glasgow and was the son of one of the founding members of the ILP George Carmichael. He was educated at Scottish Labour College then became an engineer. He was a member of Glasgow Town Council at the time of the Cathcart by-election, having joined in 1929. He became a magistrate gaining the title of Bailie. He was the chairman of the Glasgow branches of the ILP, a member of the National Administrative Council, and was the ILP's Scottish Organising Secretary for fourteen years. While defeated in the Glasgow Cathcart by-election, he later became MP for Glasgow Bridgeton from 1946-1961 taking over James Maxton's seat after his death.

### **Clark-Hutchison, Iain (George), Sir (1903-2002)**



**Contested:** Edinburgh West 12 July 1941. **Result:** Won (uncontested)

**Political Affiliation:** Unionist.

George Iain Clark Hutchison, (known as Iain), was the son of Sir George Clark Hutchison a Unionist MP for North Midlothian between 1922-1929. He was born in Edinburgh and was later educated at the Royal Naval Colleges in Dartmouth. He joined the Royal Navy in 1916 as a cadet, over the course of his career he specialised in torpedo science. He retired from the Navy in 1931. He then continued his family career and became an active member of the Unionist party. He stood as a candidate in Glasgow Maryhill in the 1931 general election, after being unsuccessful he joined the Edinburgh Town Council. He was eventually elected to parliament in 1941 for the Edinburgh West constituency as an unopposed candidate. He was recalled to Naval service during the Second World War in the ordnance naval inspection department. He retained his seat in the 1945 general election remaining an MP until 1959 when he retired from politics.

### **Cooney, Robert (1908-1984)**



**Contested:** Greenock, 10 July 1941. **Result:** Withdrew candidature four days before election. **Political Affiliation:** Labour then Communist.

Robert (Bob) Cooney was born Sunderland moving to Aberdeen as a child. After leaving school he was apprenticed to a pawnbroker which allegedly awoke his hatred of poverty and stimulated his interest in politics. He joined the Labour party in 1926, but was expelled in 1928 for supporting a Communist candidate; soon afterwards he joined the Communist party. In 1931 he went to the Soviet Union for a year to study at the Lenin Institute. Upon his return to Scotland, he became an organiser for the party in Aberdeen, then later an Edinburgh area organiser. On the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War he joined the International Brigades and fought with distinction becoming Commissar of the XV British

Brigade. Upon his return from the war he resumed his political activism, but was drafted into the Second World War in 1940 earning the rank of Gunner. He contested the Greenock by-election in July 1941 just after the Soviet Union entered the war. The Communists were forced into a political U-turn declaring support for the government. Cooney withdrew his candidature with some reluctance just four days before the contest was due to take place. He continued his political activism for the remainder of his life interspersed with a career as a singer. In his later years he was interviewed about his life experiences, and published a memoir about the Spanish Civil War entitled *Proud Journey a Spanish Civil War Memoir*.

### **Douglas Home, William (1912-1992)**



**Contested:** Glasgow Cathcart 29 April 1942. **Result:** Defeated. **Votes:** 3,807 (21%)

**Political Affiliation:** Independent (later Unionist and Liberal).

William Douglas Home was born in Edinburgh and was the son of the thirteenth Earl of Home. He spent most of his childhood at the family's ancestral home the Hirsell in Coldstream before being educated at Eton and Oxford. He graduated with a fourth in History and embarked on an acting career, but ultimately preferred to write plays rather than star in them. He was a supporter of appeasement in the 1930s. Although he was mostly a pacifist, he was called up in 1940 serving as a second lieutenant in the Royal East Kent Regiment. He was opposed to Churchill's policy of unconditional German surrender, and contested three by-elections as an independent progressive candidate. First contesting at Glasgow Cathcart, then Windsor in June 1942 winning 42% of the vote and then Clay Cross in April 1944 winning only 10%. He was later court-martialled in 1944 for refusing to take part in the assault of Le Havre, serving a year's hard labour. Later in his life he contested by-elections as a candidate for the Unionists then the Liberals. He failed to win any of these contests and focused on his writing career.

### **Fraser, Thomas (1911-1988)**



**Contested:** Hamilton, 29 January 1943 **Result:** Won **Votes:** 10,725 (81.1%) **Political Affiliation:** Labour.

Thomas (Tom) Fraser was born in Lanarkshire and became a miner after leaving school at 14 until he entered parliament. He was the President of the Coalburn Miners Union and the Secretary for the Lanark Labour Party from 1939-1943. He was the member of parliament for Hamilton from 1943-1967. His later political career saw him become Minister for Transport between 1964-65. He was responsible for introducing the 70mph speed limit to motorways and enacting the Beeching report to close railway lines across the country. He retired from politics to become Chairman of the North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board. Taking over from Thomas Galbraith (see below).

### Galbraith, Thomas Dunlop (1891-1985), 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Strathclyde (from 1955).



**Contested:** Glasgow Pollok, 30 April 1940. **Result:** Won. **Votes:** 17,850 (88%) **Political Affiliation:** Unionist.

Thomas Galbraith was born and educated in Glasgow before joining the Royal Navy in 1903. He became a Lieutenant in 1913 remaining in service during the First World War. After the war he became an accountant in 1925, and shortly afterwards embarked on his political career. He was a councillor in Glasgow from 1933-1940, before becoming the MP for Glasgow Pollok from 1940-1955. He was also redrafted into the Scottish Naval Command during the Second World War and he posted to Washington to assist in negotiating the Lend-Lease agreement. He returned to take up his seat in the House of Commons. He was elevated to the peerage in 1955, but served as Minister of State for Scotland between 1955-1958 from the upper house. After leaving this post he was the Chairman of the North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board. His successor was Thomas Fraser (see above).

### Hilditch, Henry (1891-1970)



**Contested:** Kirkcaldy, 17 February 1944. **Result:** Defeated **Votes:** 1,136 (7%) **Political Affiliation:** Labour but stood as Christian Socialist candidate.

Henry Hilditch was born in Cheshire and had served in the First World War joining the machine gun corps of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. He was involved in the Somme and was awarded the Military Cross for his bravery. He was injured in action and his war ended in 1916. This experience turned him solidly pacifist. He became a lay Methodist preacher during the 1930s and was a founder member of the Peace Pledge Union. He also contributed to the *Peace News*. He had owned a scrap metal business in Birmingham which he sold at the beginning of the Second World War to prevent it being turned over to making weapons, such was his pacifism. He bought a large house in Worcestershire with the proceeds and it became a place for pacifist to meet and seek advice. He contested the Kirkcaldy by-election in February 1944, standing on a pacifist and anti-capitalist agenda, but lost his deposit. He stood as a Labour party candidate in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1951, but was defeated by the Conservative John Profumo. He left politics behind in 1952 to retire to the Isle of Skye.

### Hubbard Thomas (1898-1961)



**Contested:** Kirkcaldy, 17 February 1944. **Result:** Won. **Votes:** 8,268 (51.6%) **Political Affiliation:** Labour

Thomas Hubbard was born in Kirkcaldy; he had a very basic education before leaving school early to become a grocer's assistant. He was in the Navy for the duration of the First World War. He became a miner after the war then joined the Labour party soon after. He was a member of the Kirkcaldy Town Council from 1936. He was forced to retire as miner after suffering from a work-related injury during the war. He became the MP for Kirkcaldy in 1944 and remained the MP for the constituency until he retired in 1959. He

remained a back bencher for his political career, briefly serving as Parliamentary Private Secretary for the Scottish Secretary Joseph Westwood from 1946-47.

### **King Murray, David Thomas, Lord Birnam KC, (1884-1955)**



**Contested:** North Midlothian and Peebles. **Result:** Won **Votes:** 11,620 (51.9%) **Political Affiliation:** Unionist.

Sir David King Murray was born in Bothwell Lanarkshire and educated in Glasgow, graduating with three degrees from Glasgow University. He became a solicitor in 1908 and an advocate in 1910. He served in the Royal Navy Reservists during the First World War. He resumed his career as a solicitor afterwards rising through the ranks finally becoming a KC in 1933. He was promoted to Chairman of the Scottish Land Court in 1938 taking the name Lord Murray, a position he held until 1941. He then became Solicitor General for Scotland joining the Coalition Government. He was elected MP for North Midlothian and Peebles in 1943 holding the seat until 1945. He retired as Solicitor General that year and was appointed a Lord of Session taking the title Lord Birnam. He was acknowledged as being one of the finest KC's of the time and his political career was a short aside to success in Law.

### **Letham, John (c.1900-?)**



**Contested:** Hamilton 29 January 1943. **Result:** Defeated. **Votes:** 2,503 (19%) **Political Affiliation:** Independent.

John Letham resided in Hamilton where he was burgh magistrate, a member of the Hamilton Town Council and Secretary of the Citizens Advice Bureau. He was employed as a LNER engine driver. He stood as an independent candidate at the Hamilton by-election on a policy which focused heavily on the provision of old age pensions. He was defeated by his Labour rival who achieved a majority of over 8000 votes.

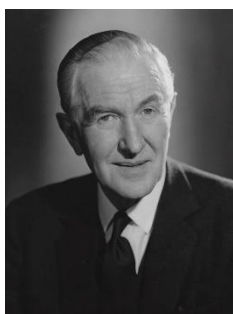
### **Lloyd, Ernest Guy Richard, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Rhu, (from 1960) (1890-1987)**



**Contested:** East Renfrewshire 10 May 1940. **Result:** Won **Votes:** 34,316 (80.7%) **Political Affiliation:** Unionist.

Guy Lloyd was born in Shropshire and was educated at Rossall School, United Services College and Keeble College Oxford graduating in 1913. He served in the British Army during the First World War and was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal in 1917. At the end of the war he remained as a reserve in the Territorial Army achieving the rank of Major in 1929. He pursued a career in textiles moving from England to Scotland in 1931 to take up an executive post with J&P Coats in Paisley. He volunteered during Second World War and was serving as part of the British Expeditionary Force in France at the time of the by-election. Lloyd's first foray into politics was serving as a county Councillor in Bolton from 1923-1931. After moving to Scotland, he became an active member of the Unionist party and was adopted as a prospective candidate for Glasgow Camlachie in 1938. He became the MP for East Renfrewshire in 1940 and held the seat until he retired in 1959. He was knighted in 1953 then made a Baron in 1960.

### Maclay, John, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Muirshiel, KT, CH, CMG, PC, DL (1905-1992)



**Contested:** Montrose 5 July 1940 **Result:** Won unopposed **Political Affiliations:** Liberal National and from 1947 Unionist.

John Maclay was born into a political family as his father Baron Maclay was Minister of Shipping during the First World War. Maclay attended Trinity College Cambridge graduating in 1927, he later joining the family shipping business where he remained until 1940. He did not join the other family business, politics, until becoming MP for Montrose in 1940. He did not make his first speech in parliament until 1944 as he was sent to Washington to work on a British merchant shipping mission. He became more active in politics upon his return. His career post 1945 included a period as Leader of the National Liberals before they re-affiliated with the Conservative in 1947, as well as being Minister of Civil Aviation and Transport and Minister of State for the Colonies. He became the MP for West Renfrewshire after the seat of Montrose was abolished in 1950. His career highlight was serving as Secretary of State for Scotland from 1957-1962.

### MacEwen, Malcolm, (1911-1996)



**Contested:** Dunbartonshire, 27 February 1941. **Result:** Defeated. **Votes** 3,842 (15%): **Political Affiliations:** Labour until 1939, then Communist.

Malcolm MacEwen was the youngest son of the first leader of the SNP Sir Alexander MacEwen. He was born in Inverness and educated at Rossall school then studied law at the University of Edinburgh where he became a Marxist. He joined the Labour party becoming the first Labour representative of Ross-shire county council. He had been the prospective Labour candidate for Ross-shire until 1940, but he joined the Communist party after Labour agreed to the electoral truce in 1939. He stood as the Communist candidate in Dunbartonshire in February 1941. Although he was defeated, he received one of the highest votes for a Communist candidate in a wartime by-election. He was employed by the *Daily Worker* until 1956 in various roles including as a foreign correspondent. He later became a passionate conservationist. He lost part of his leg in a motorbike accident aged 21 and was involved in several car crashes during his lifetime; including during the Dunbartonshire campaign. He was known contemporarily as a terrible driver.

### MacEwen Robert, R. (Robin) (dates unknown)



**Contested:** Dunbartonshire, 27 February 1941. **Result:** Unable to contest. **Political Affiliation:** Scottish National Party.

Robert (Robin) MacEwan was the second son of Sir Alexander MacEwen and was also a member of the Scottish National Party. He was a close friend of Neil Gunn and he was one of the members who assisted in uniting the National Party of Scotland with the Scottish party in 1933. He was a private in the Royal Army Pay Corps during the Second World War. He was chosen as the SNP's prospective candidate in the Dunbartonshire by-election of 1941, set to contest against his younger brother. However, his application to contest was received too late so the military authorities refused him permission to contest. Therefore, his

candidature did not proceed. It was later discovered there had been a misunderstanding about the procedure without which MacEwen would have been allowed to stand.

### Maxton, Annie, (1916-1967)



**Contested:** East Renfrewshire, 9 May 1940. **Result:** Defeated. **Votes:** 8,206 (19%) **Political Affiliation:** ILP.

Annie Maxton was the younger sister of the well-known Scottish MP James Maxton. Born and raised in Barrhead, she trained as a teacher becoming very involved with the Education Institute Scotland serving on their National Council. She was encouraged to join the ILP by her brother and represented the party on Barrhead Town Council which she joined in 1930. She rose through prominence in the party becoming Chair of the Scottish Divisional Council of the ILP, and was part of the National Administrative Council until the 1960s. Maxton was a pacifist and was endorsed as a Stop-The-War candidate in addition to her standing for the ILP in East Renfrewshire. Although defeated she polled the highest number of votes for a pacifist candidate up until that period. She remained an active member of the ILP after the war.

### McCallum, Duncan, Sir. (1888-1958)



**Contested:** Argyllshire, 10 April 1940. **Result:** Won. **Votes:** 12,317 (62.8%) **Political Affiliation:** Unionist.

Duncan McCallum was born in Fulham and was the son of the entertainer known as Charles Coborn. He was educated at Filey School and Christ's Hospital. He joined the army during the First World War winning the Military Cross for bravery. After the war he was employed as liaison officer for the British army and was based in Syria. During the 1920s he undertook several daring journeys travelling across the Syrian desert to Baghdad by car, then later when he was Commandant of the British Legation Guard in Beijing he drove from Beijing to London. He wrote about his experiences in his book *China to Chelsea, a Modern Pilgrimage Along Ancient Highways*. He settled in Kilmarnaig, Argyllshire and became an active member of the local Unionist association. He was posted to Egypt at the outbreak of the Second World War as an Intelligence Officer and held the rank of Major. He returned when nominated at the Unionist candidate for Argyllshire in April 1940. After winning the election, he remained the MP for the constituency until 1958. He was known as a cultural nationalist throughout his life being a strong proponent of Gaelic culture. He was a vocal advocate for the resumption of Unionist party political activity throughout the Second World War. McCallum was knighted in 1955.

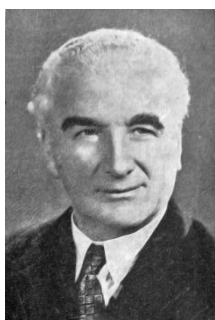
### McIntyre, Robert Dr. MB ChB DPH JP (1913-1998)



**Contested:** Motherwell 12 April 1945. **Result:** Won **Votes:** 11,417 (51.4%)  
**Political Affiliations:** Labour then Scottish Nationalist Party.

Robert McIntyre was born and raised in Motherwell where his father was a minister. He was educated at Hamilton Academy and Daniel Stewart's College. He initially studied Chemistry at the University of Edinburgh before switching to Medicine. He later undertook a diploma in Public Health at the University of Glasgow. While at Edinburgh he joined the Labour party and represented the university as a delegate at the Edinburgh Trades and Labour Council. He became disillusioned with the party's lack of commitment to Home Rule. He joined the SNP in 1940 and quickly became one of the most senior figures. He was the National Secretary from 1940-1945, the Leader of the party from 1957-1956, and President from 1958-1980. He helped to build up the party after the 1942 split and would later be one of the leading intellectuals in shaping party policy post-war. He famously won the 1945 Motherwell by-election and held the seat until the July, when he lost to his Labour opponent Alex Anderson. McIntyre initially refused sponsors to allow him to take his seat in the Commons as he was against 'London Controlled Parties.' He eventually relented and allowed two Scottish Labour MP's to sponsor him under protest. After losing his seat he combined his medical career with politics and stood in every general election as a candidate until 1974. He was later Provost of Stirling from 1967-1975.

### McKinlay, Adam (1887-1950)



**Contested:** Dunbartonshire, 27 February 1941. **Result:** Won. **Votes:** 21,900 (85%) **Political Affiliation:** Labour.

Adam McKinlay was born and educated in Glasgow. He joined the Labour party and was member of parliament for Glasgow Pollok from 1929-1931 where he acted as the Parliamentary Private Secretary for Thomas Johnston. He lost his seat in the 1931 General Election and failed to be elected again in 1935. Instead he joined Glasgow City Council becoming Chairman of the Food Control Committee and Convenor of Housing. He was Senior Magistrate of the City of Glasgow at the time of the Dunbartonshire by-election, carrying the title of Bailie. He won the seat holding it until 1950 when the constituency was abolished. He became the MP for the new constituency of West Dunbartonshire in February 1950, but passed away the following month.

### McNeil, Hector, (1907-1955)



**Contested:** Greenock 10 July 1941. **Result:** Won unopposed. **Political Affiliation:** Labour.

Hector Neil was born in Garelochhead in Argyllshire, he attended Glasgow University to study engineering but later became a journalist. He was the night editor of the *Scottish Daily Express* when he was elected to parliament. His political career began in 1932 when he became a member of Glasgow Town Council and later the Chair of the Glasgow Trades Council. He had already had several unsuccessful attempts to be elected for parliament before winning the seat of Greenock July 1941. His

win was unopposed as his Communist opponent withdrew four days before the election. He remained MP for Greenock until his untimely death in 1955. He held several high offices in the post-war Labour government and his most notable achievement was as Secretary of State for Scotland from 1950-51.

### **Munro, Ronald Mackenzie, (dates unknown)**

**Contested:** Scottish Combined Universities, 9-13 April 1945. **Result:** Defeated. **Votes:** 8,177 (28.8%). **Political Affiliation** National Liberal

Ronald Munro was from Dingwall, and was the Master of Aberhill School in Fife and President of the Education Institute Scotland. He stood as a National Liberal candidate in the Combined Scottish Universities by-election of April 1945. He pledged to support the National Government and received a message of support from the Prime Minister Winston Churchill. He was defeated by the independent candidate Sir John Boyd Orr.

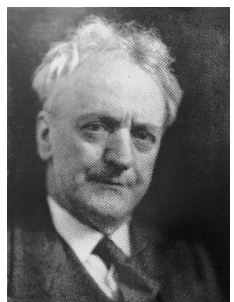
### **Nicolson, John, (dates unknown)**



**Contested:** Glasgow Pollok, 30 April 1940. **Result:** Defeated. **Votes:** 2,401 (12%) **Political Affiliations:** Labour and Independent Labour.

John Nicolson was the Chairman of the Pollok Divisional Labour party. He decided to stand as an independent Labour candidate in the Glasgow Pollok by-election against the Unionist government candidate, thus breaking the electoral truce. The branch was disaffiliated for breaking the rules. Nicolson declared himself to be a pacifist and stood as a protest against the electoral truce.

### **Power, William (1873-1951)**



**Contested:** Argyllshire, 10 April 1940. **Result:** Defeated. **Votes:** 7,308 (37%) **Political Affiliation:** Scottish National Party.

William Power was born and educated in Glasgow. His father died when he was 13, forcing him to leave school prematurely and he found employment as a bank clerk. He continued his education taking classes in English literature. He contributed articles to the *Glasgow Herald* for years before joining the newspaper as an editor in 1906. He supported the Scottish renaissance literary movement and was especially supportive of C.M Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid). He left the *Glasgow Herald* in 1926 to become editor of a new newspaper called the *Scots Observer*. The paper was not a success and he resigned in 1929 to become an editor at Associated Newspapers. He was a successful author publishing several works during the interwar years. He was heavily involved in the Scottish PEN movement, later become President in 1935. He became a member of the National Party of Scotland in the late 1920s and then a member of the SNP after its formation in 1934. Power was close to the Party Secretary John MacCormick and was a supporter of war upon its outbreak in 1939. He was elected as the SNP candidate in Argyllshire precisely because of this pro-war stance, but was defeated in the election. He acted as SNP party leader from 1940-42. His defeat at the party conference in 1942 led to the split in the party. He left the SNP to become a member of the Scottish Convention and was President of the organisation from 1942 until his death in 1951.

### Stewart Andrew (c.1912-?)



**Contested:** Clackmannan and East Stirlingshire, 13 October 1939. **Result:** Defeated **Votes:** 1,060 (6.5%) **Political Affiliation:** Independent pacifist.

Andrew Stewart was educated at the University of Glasgow he became involved with pacifism after acting as the election agent for George Sheppard during his campaign to become Rector. After leaving university he moved to London and became deputy editor of the *Peace News*, a pacifist newspaper produced by the Peace Pledge Union. He was very critical of the British Union of Fascists who infiltrated the PPU before the outbreak of the Second World War, commenting openly that membership of the two unions were incompatible. He was defeated by Arthur Woodburn in the by-election losing his deposit. He remained a pacifist and member of the PPU for the duration of the war.

### Taylor, Thomas, Baron Taylor of Gryfe (from 1968) (1912-2001)



**Contested:** Edinburgh Central 11 December 1941. **Result:** Defeated. **Votes:** 1,950 (29%) **Political Affiliations:** ILP, Social Democrat Party and Labour.

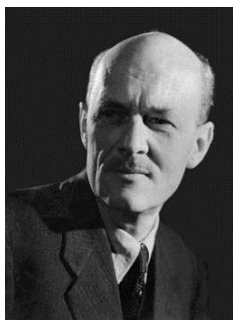
Thomas (Tom) Taylor was born and educated in Glasgow, leaving school at 14 to become an office boy for the Scottish Co-Operative Wholesale Society. In 1932 his employers arranged for him to spend a year in Germany on a scholarship to learn German. This coincided with Hitler's rise to power. He had joined the ILP and was elected as a Glasgow City Councillor aged 22. Because of his German language capabilities, he was recruited by Fenner Brockway in 1938 to go to Austria and assist well-known socialist activists to escape. It was an extraordinarily dangerous mission and required Taylor to become an amateur spy. His mission was successful and he left Austria just as Hitler invaded. His loyalties were torn on the outbreak of the Second World War as his party were pacifist, but having witnessed first-hand Hitler's regime, he understood the reasons for the war better than many. He registered as a Conscientious Objector and assisted with the re-settlement of European refugees. He contested the Edinburgh Central by-election for the ILP in December 1941 having entered the contest very late; just a week before polling. He had little time to campaign, thus only gained 29% of the vote on a very low turnout and was defeated by the Unionist candidate. His later career was very successful acting as Forestry Commissioner and was President of the Co-operative Society, amongst the many chairmanships and board memberships he held throughout his life. He was made a Baron in 1968 and was an active member of the House of Lords.

### Watt, Francis Clifford (Frank) (1896-1971)

**Contested:** Edinburgh Central, 11 December 1941. **Result:** Won. **Votes:** 4,771 (71%) **Political Affiliation:** Unionist.

Frank Watt was the MP for Edinburgh Central from 1941-45. He was an Advocate having been called to the bar in 1925, and was made a KC in 1946. After being defeated in the 1945 general election, he went on to be Sheriff of Caithness & Sutherland from 1952-61, then Sheriff of Dumbarton and Clackmannan from 1961 until his death in 1971.

### Wintringham, Thomas Henry [Tom] (1898-1949)



**Contested:** North Midlothian and Peebles, 11 February 1943. **Result:** Defeated. **Votes:** 10,751 (48%) **Political Affiliations:** Communist Party of Great Britain, Labour and Common Wealth Party.

Tom Wintringham was born in Grimsby to a non-conformist's family which influenced his political and religious affiliations throughout his life. He was educated at Gresham School then postponed taking up a History scholarship at Oxford to serve in the Flying Corps during the First World War. The experience of war left him very sceptical of hierarchical authority which shaped his political beliefs. He returned to his studies at Oxford in 1919 and discovered Marxism. He joined the Communist Party and visited Russia in 1920. After leaving Oxford he read for the bar, but his legal career was ended by being charged with sedition for his Communist publications and was imprisoned for six months. He eventually moved away from Communism embracing the left of the Labour party. Throughout the interwar years he built a career as an editor and writer gaining respect for his understanding of military affairs. He served with the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War, commanding a British battalion until he was sent home with injuries. The experience of guerrilla warfare was the basis of his campaign for the Home Guard for which he is best known. He opened his Home Guard Training school in London, but the British Army did not take his idea seriously due to his radical past. It was not until after 1940 when they saw the merit of the idea and took over the training of officers. After this he was side-lined and he was never allowed to join his own creation as a former Communist. He helped form the Common Wealth party in 1942, his high profile helping attract members. He stood as a candidate in North Midlothian by-election in February 1943 despite having no connection to the area. He proved to be a popular candidate and was only narrowly defeated. He was a Common Wealth candidate in Aldershot at the 1945 general election, again he was narrowly defeated. He continued to write after the war never quite achieving the popularity he had during the war, he passed away in 1949.

### Woodburn, Arthur (1890-1978)



**Contested:** Clackmannan and East Stirlingshire, 13 October 1939. **Result:** Won **Votes:** 15,645 (93.7%) **Political Affiliation:** ILP and Labour.

Arthur Woodburn was born in Edinburgh and educated at Boroughmuir high school leaving at 14 to work in the office of the United Free Church. He attended evening classes at Heriot-Watt College for over twelve years to learn a variety of subjects including accounting, commerce and European languages. He joined the ILP in 1916 and although in a reserved occupation, he openly became a pacifist and part of the No-Conscription Union. He addressed public meetings on the subject and was eventually arrested and imprisoned for the remainder of the war. After his release in 1919 he worked at an Edinburgh foundry. After the war he lectured at Scottish Labour College and would later become its President in 1937. He grew more involved with the Labour party standing as a candidate in the general elections of 1929 and 1931, failing both times to be elected. He became the Scottish Secretary of the Labour Party in 1932 during the period where the ILP disaffiliated and the party was in disarray. He did his best to turn around the party fortunes,

and the NEC were dismayed when he decided to stand as a candidate in Clackmannan leaving the role of Secretary vacant. He represented Clackmannan from 1939-1970. His career highlights included being Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Scotland, Thomas Johnston, from 1941-45. He later gained that position himself in 1947 holding the Secretaryship during a difficult period when the Scottish Covenant movement pushed for devolution. He was sacked from the position in 1950 and remained a backbencher until he retired in 1970.

#### **Whyte, William, (dates unknown)**

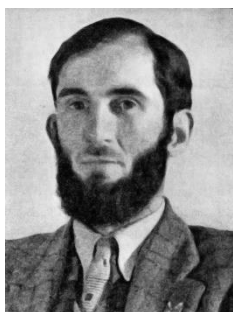


**Contested:** Glasgow Cathcart, 29 April 1942 **Result:** Defeated. **Votes:** 1,000 (5.5%) **Political Affiliation:** Scottish National Party.

William Whyte was a chartered accountant from Glasgow who contested the Glasgow Cathcart by-election as an 'independent Scottish Nationalist.' He withdrew briefly from the campaign believing that Scottish interests were catered for by the remaining candidates.

However, he re-entered the contests several days later claiming that he was no longer satisfied with the remaining candidates' stances on the future of Scotland. He suffered one of the worst defeats by the SNP both during the war and at previous by-elections.

#### **Young, Douglas Cuthbert Colquhoun, Professor, (1913-1973)**



**Contested:** Kirkcaldy Burghs, 17 February 1944. **Result:** Defeated. **Votes:** 6,621 (41%) **Political Affiliations:** Scottish National Party and Labour.

Douglas Young was born in Abertay, but spent a large part of his childhood in India due to his father's occupation as a merchant. He was educated at Merchiston, then the Universities of St. Andrews and Oxford, reading classics. He became an academic with positions at Aberdeen, Dundee and St Andrews Universities. He was also well known for his poetry and formed close friendships with leading Scottish poets Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley MacLean. His interest in politics began when he joined the Labour party then the Scottish National Party in 1938. He was Secretary of the Aberdeen branch of the SNP during the 1940s. He refused conscription during the Second World War on the basis that only a Scottish government could conscript him. He would undertake trials and prison sentences between 1940 and 1944. His tub-thumping orations in his own defence turned his trials into courtroom dramas, which gave him notoriety in Second World War Scotland. He was elected party leader in 1942 by only two votes, leading to the party split. He served in that position until 1945 even while in prison. He contested the Kirkcaldy by-election between spells in prison and was only narrowly defeated by the Labour candidate. He stood again in the 1945 General Election, but with the confines of the electoral truce being removed he only won 17% of the vote. He grew disenchanted with the SNP after 1945 especially on the issue of dual membership of other political parties. He refused to resign from the Labour party and left the SNP in 1948. He remained heavily involved in Scottish PEN for the remainder of his life, and was a founder member of the 1320 club in 1967. His academic career took him to America in 1968, he died suddenly in 1973.

**Appendix C – Results of 1945 General Election in Scotland**

Aberdeen, North.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
H.S.J. Hughes	Labour	26,753	69.6	57,109	67.2	17,130
Lady Grant of Monymusk	Unionist	9,623	25.1			
A.W. Walker	SNP	2,021	5.3			

Aberdeen, South.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
Sir J.D.W. Thomson, Bt.	Unionist	19,214	46.8	57,200	71.9	1,816
W. McLaine	Labour	17,398	42.3			
J.L. Milne	Liberal	4,501	10.9			

Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire, Central.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
H.R. Spence	Unionist	15,702	52.3	43,984	68.3	7,705
D.S. Hay	Labour	7,997	26.6			
I.R.M. Davies	Liberal	6,348	21.1			

Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire, Eastern.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
R.J.G. Boothby	Unionist	13,290	54.9	36,837	65.7	2,372
J.R. Allan	Labour	10,918	45.1			

Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire, Kincardine and Western.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
C.N. Thornton-Kemsley	Unionist	10,932	51.5	30,901	68.7	642
J.D.B. Junor	Liberal	10,290	48.5			

## Argyll.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
D. McCallum	Unionist	15,791	56.5	43,822	63.7	6,902
A.M. Weir	Labour	8,889	31.9			
J.M. Bannerman	Liberal	3,228	11.6			

## Ayr District of Burghs.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
Sir T.C.R. Moore	Unionist	22,593	50.8	62,182	71.5	728
W. Ross	Labour	21,865	49.2			

## Ayrshire and Bute, Bute and Northern.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
Sir C.G. MacAndrew	Unionist	21,652	53.0	59,657	68.5	2,443
J.T. Wheatley	Labour	19,209	47.0			

## Banffshire.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
W.S. Duthie	Unionist	10,689	49.5	32,483	66.5	4,288
I.A.D. Millar	Liberal	6,401	29.6			
D. Macpherson	Labour	4,524	20.9			

## Berwickshire and Haddingtonshire.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
J.J. Robertson	Labour	19,037	54.5	49,641	70.3	3,157
J.H.F. McEwen	Unionist	15,880	45.5			

## Caithness and Sutherland.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
E.L. Gandar-Dower	Unionist	5,564	33.5	25,989	64.0	6
R.I.A. MacInnes	Labour	5,558	33.4			
Rt. Hon. Sir A.H.M. Sinclair, Bt.	Liberal	5,503	33.1			

## Combined Scottish Universities.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
J. Anderson	National	16,011	48.8	63,581	51.6	n/a
J. Boyd-Orr	Independent	10,685	32.6			
H. Sutherland	Labour	2,860	8.7			
R.S Weir	Liberal	1,872	5.7			
J.G. Kerr	Unionist	1,361	4.2			

## Dumbarton District of Burghs.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
D. Kirkwood	Labour	16,262	65.2	34,067	73.2	7,586
J. Richardson	Unionist	8,676	34.8			

## Dumfriesshire.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
N.M.S. Macpherson	National Labour	16,465	47.4	48,092	72.2	4,077
D. Dunwoodie	Labour/ Co-op	12,388	35.7			
I. McColl	Liberal	5,850	16.9			

## Dunbartonshire.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
A.S. McKinlay	Labour	28,383	50.7	78,100	71.7	747
R.A. Allan	Unionist	27,636	49.3			

## Dundee (Two-Member Constituency)

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
T.F. Cook	Labour	48,804	28.6	110,563	79.2	15,163
E.J.L. Strachey	Labour	48,393	28.4			
D.M. Foot	Liberal	33,230	19.5			
Rt. Hon. Florence Horsbrugh	Unionist	32,309	18.9			
A. Donaldson	SNP	7,776	4.6			

## Dunfermline District of Burghs.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
W.M. Watson	Labour	22,021	64.7	46,672	73.0	9,993
J. Henderson	National Labour	12,028	35.3			

## Edinburgh, Central.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
A. Gilzean	Labour	10,921	54.3	33,783	59.5	4,220
F.C. Watt	Unionist	6,701	33.3			
N.A. Donald	Liberal	2,262	11.2			
H. Sleight	Independent	232	1.2			

## Edinburgh, East.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
Rt. Hon. F.W. Pethick-Lawrence	Labour	19,300	56.4	49,292	69.4	6,529
W.A. Sinclair	Unionist	12,771	37.3			
F.C. Yeaman	SNP	2,149	6.3			

## Edinburgh, North.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
E.G. Willis	Labour	12,825	45.1	44,039	64.6	555
Sir A.G. Erskine-Hill, Bt.	Unionist	12,270	43.1			
C.H. Johnston	Liberal	3,344	11.8			

## Edinburgh, South.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
Sir W.Y. Darling	Unionist	23,652	70.8	50,348	66.4	13,885
W.P. Earsman	Labour	9,767	29.2			

## Edinburgh, West.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
G.I.C. Hutchison	Unionist	19,894	47.3	62,196	67.5	1,054
G.G. Stott	Labour	18,840	44.9			
J.G. Thomson	Liberal	3,256	7.8			

## Fife, Eastern.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
J. Henderson-Stewart	National Labour	24,765	69.4	50,387	70.8	13,845
S.P. McLaren	Labour/Co-op	10,920	30.6			

## Fife, Western.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
W. Gallacher	Communist	17,636	42.1	55,419	75.4	2,056
W.W. Hamilton	Labour	15,580	37.3			
Dr. R.S. Stevenson	National Labour	8,597	20.6			

Forfarshire.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
Hon. S. Ramsay	Unionist	13,615	51.6	38,286	68.9	5,416
E.S. Douglas	Labour	8,199	31.1			
C.P. Fothergill	Liberal	4,576	17.3			

Galloway.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
J.H. Mackie	Independent Unionist	13,647	40.7	47,922	69.9	1,825
R.N. Hales	Labour	11,822	35.3			
B.E. Fergusson	Unionist	8,032	24.0			

Glasgow, Bridgeton.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
J. Maxton	Independent Labour	13,220	66.4	34,217	58.2	6,525
R.C. Brooman-White	Unionist	6,695	33.6			

Glasgow, Camlachie.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
Rev. C. Stephen	Independent Labour	15,558	57.7	41,480	65.0	4,159
C.S. McFarlane	Unionist	11,399	42.3			

Glasgow, Cathcart.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
F. Beattie	Unionist	18,472	58.8	46,442	67.6	5,549
N. Jackson	Labour	12,923	41.2			

## Glasgow, Central.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
J.R.H. Hutchison	Unionist	9,365	44.0	35,734	59.6	1,156
J. McInnes	Labour	7,849	36.9			
R.H. Cooney	Communist	2,709	12.7			
N.M. Glen	Liberal	1,072	5.0			
G.A. Aldred	Independent Socialist	300	1.4			

## Glasgow, Gorbals.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
G. Buchanan	Labour	21,073	80.0	46,394	56.8	15,804
I.A. Mactaggart	Unionist	5,269	20.0			

## Glasgow, Govan.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
N. Maclean	Labour	18,668	66.1	44,197	63.9	9,082
J.N. Browne	Unionist	9,586	33.9			

## Glasgow, Hillhead.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
Rt. Hon. J.S.C. Reid	Unionist	14,909	58.5	38,669	65.8	6,364
H.T. MacCalman	Labour	8,545	33.6			
J.G. Wilson	Liberal	2,003	7.9			

## Glasgow, Kelvingrove.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
J.L. Williams	Labour	12,273	46.0	43,225	61.7	88
Rt. Hon. W.E. Elliot	Unionist	12,185	45.7			
C.M. Grieve	SNP	1,314	4.9			
C.J.E. Morgan	Liberal	919	3.4			

## Glasgow, Maryhill.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
W. Hannan	Labour	23,595	60.1	58,857	66.8	7,902
W.R. McLean	Unionist	15,693	39.9			

## Glasgow, Partick.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
A.S.L. Young	Unionist	13,851	51.6	38,899	69.0	853
G.A. Younger	Labour/ Co-op	12,998	48.4			

## Glasgow, Pollok.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
T.D. Galbraith	Unionist	20,072	63.5	46,397	68.2	9,442
A.B. Mackay	Labour	10,630	33.6			
W.J. Voisey- Youldon	Common Wealth	932	2.9			

## Glasgow, Shettleston.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
J. McGovern	Independent Labour	11,947	35.4	50,498	66.6	1,494
W.G. Bennett	Unionist	10,453	31.1			
J.S. Dallas	Labour	6,910	20.6			
P. Kerrigan	Communist	4,122	12.3			
I. Queen	Independent	186	0.6			

## Glasgow, Springburn.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
J.C. Forman	Labour/ Co-op	21,698	65.0	52,532	63.6	10,008
R.H.S. Calver	Unionist	11,690	35.0			

## Glasgow, St. Rollox.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
W. Leonard	Labour/ Co-op	14,520	62.9	37,745	61.1	5,967
W.R. Milligan	Unionist	8,553	37.1			

## Glasgow, Tradeston.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
J. Rankin	Labour/ Co-op	13,153	59.7	35,499	62.0	4,282
H.R. Black	Unionist	8,871	40.3			

## Greenock.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
H. McNeil	Labour	16,186	47.0	50,561	68.0	8,089
Lord Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton	Unionist	8,097	23.6			
J.R. Campbell	Communist	5,900	17.2			
G.G. Honeyman	Liberal	4,180	12.2			

## Hamilton.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
T. Fraser	Labour	20,015	73.5	38,934	70.0	12,789
J.U. Baillie	Unionist	7,226	26.5			

## Inverness.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
Sir M. Macdonald	Independent Labour	12,090	43.2	47,335	59.0	2,435
N.G. Maclean	Labour	9,655	34.6			
J.M. MacCormick	Liberal	6,200	22.2			

## Kilmarnock.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
Mrs. C. M. Shaw	Labour	23,837	59.4	52,721	76.1	7,537
G.E.O. Walker	Unionist	16,300	40.6			

## Kirkcaldy District of Burghs.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
T.F. Hubbard	Labour	15,401	45.0	44,883	76.2	5,302
C.W.G. Guest	Unionist	10,099	29.5			
D.C.C. Young	SNP	5,811	17.0			
J. McArthur	Communist	2,898	8.5			

## Lanarkshire, Bothwell.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
J. Timmons	Labour	25,369	65.8	52,854	73.0	12,162
Mrs. H.B. Shaw	Unionist	13,207	34.2			

## Lanarkshire, Coatbridge.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
Mrs. J. Mann	Labour	18,619	61.1	40,104	76.0	6,777
R.S. Russell	Unionist	11,842	38.9			

## Lanark.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
T. Steele	Labour	17,784	52.8	45,026	74.8	1,884
Lord Dunglass	Unionist	15,900	47.2			

## Lanarkshire, Northern.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
Miss M.M. Herbison	Labour	30,251	59.6	69,190	73.3	9,762
W.J. Anstruther-Gray	Unionist	20,489	40.4			

## Leith.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
J.H. Hoy	Labour	19,571	60.9	46,581	69.1	9,455
Rt. Hon. A.E. Brown	National Labour	10,116	31.4			
J. Cormack	Independent	2,493	7.7			

## Linlithgowshire.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
G. Mathers	Labour	24,762	64.1	52,752	73.2	10,891
R.M. Speir	Unionist	13,871	35.9			

## Midlothian and Peeblesshire, Northern.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
Lord John Hope	Unionist	24,834	47.9	73,831	70.1	1,177
J. Lean	Labour	23,657	45.7			
Mrs. K. Wintringham	Common Wealth	3,299	6.4			

## Midlothian and Peeblesshire, Peebles and Southern.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
D.J. Pryde	Labour	15,546	55.8	37,931	73.5	6,496
J.L. Clyde	Unionist	9,050	32.4			
L. Gellatly	Liberal	3,299	11.8			

## Montrose District of Burghs.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
Hon. J.S. Maclay	National Labour	13,966	58.2	33,162	72.3	3,955
T.A. MacNair	Labour	10,011	41.8			

## Moray and Nairnshire.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
Rt. Hon. J. Stuart	Unionist	12,809	61.6	33,639	61.8	4,816
S. Shaw	Labour	7,993	38.4			

## Motherwell.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
A. Anderson	Labour	15,831	52.7	41,258	72.8	7,809
Dr. R.D. McIntyre	SNP	8,022	26.7			
J.H. Hamilton	Unionist	6,197	20.6			

## Orkney and Shetland.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
B.H.H. Neven-Spence	Unionist	6,304	36.0	31,493	55.5	329
J. Grimond	Liberal	5,975	34.2			
P.J.L. Smith	Labour	5,208	29.8			

## Paisley.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
Viscount Corvedale	Labour	25,156	55.6	61,286	73.9	10,330
T.G.D. Galbraith	Unionist	14,826	32.7			
Lady Glen-Coats	Liberal	4,532	10.0			
A.R. Eagles	Independent	765	1.7			

## Perthshire and Kinross-Shire, Kinross and Western.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
W.M. Snadden	Unionist	16,536	68.0	36,096	67.4	8,754
Rev. C. McKinnon	Labour	7,782	32.0			

## Perthshire and Kinross-Shire, Perth.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
A. Gomme-Duncan	Unionist	22,484	63.1	54,558	65.3	10,867
W. Hughes	Labour	11,617	32.6			
J.B. Brown	SNP	1,547	4.3			

## Renfrewshire, Eastern.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
E.G.R. Lloyd	Unionist	42,310	53.6	117,431	67.2	5,676
D. McArthur	Labour/ Co-op	36,634	46.4			

## Renfrewshire, Western.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
T. Scollan	Labour	15,050	48.8	43,940	70.2	1,214
H.J. Scrymgeour-Wedderburn	Unionist	13,836	44.9			
R.B. Wilkie	SNP	1,955	6.3			

## Ross and Cromarty.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
J. MacLeod	Independent Labour	10,061	62.8	25,866	61.9	4,102
A.M. Mackintosh	Labour	5,959	37.2			

## Roxburghshire and Selkirkshire.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
Lord William Scott	Unionist	13,232	37.9	47,492	73.6	1,628
A.J.F. Macdonald	Liberal	11,604	33.2			
L.P. Thomas	Labour	10,107	28.9			

## Rutherglen.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
G. McAllister	Labour	24,738	59.6	54,280	76.4	8,002
A. Chapman	Unionist	16,736	40.4			

## South Ayrshire.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
A. Sloan	Labour	21,235	61.3	46,137	75.0	7,853
R. Mathew	Unionist	13,382	38.7			

## Stirling and Falkirk District of Burghs.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
Rt. Hon. J.C. Westwood	Labour	18,326	56.1	45,666	71.5	4,003
J.F.G. Thomson	Unionist	14,323	43.9			

## Stirlingshire and Clackmannanshire, Clackmannan and Eastern.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
A. Woodburn	Labour	24,622	62.9	54,632	71.7	10,100
Sir J.E. Gilmour, Bt.	Unionist	14,522	37.1			

## Stirlingshire and Clackmannanshire, Western.

Candidate	Party	Number of Votes	Percentage Vote Share	Total Electorate	Turnout %	Majority
A. Balfour	Labour	16,066	54.4	39,414	75.0	2,577
J.C.L. Anderson	Unionist	13,489	45.6			

Western Isles.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Percentage Vote Share</b>	<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Majority</b>
M.K. Macmillan	Labour	5,914	45.7	24,311	53.3	1,637
H.M. Sinclair	Liberal	4,277	33.0			
I.N. Macleod	Unionist	2,756	21.3			