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# **The Fragmentation of the Labour Party right, c. 1970 – 1983**

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## INTRODUCTION

[Within the Labour Party] the 1970s were a watershed not in terms of ideas but politics... The dominant feature was the failure of the radical revisionist right and the centrist conservative right to make common cause on a common programme for the first time ever.'

Bill Rodgers, quoted in Radhika Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism* (1994), p. 128.

The purpose of this thesis is to explain the gradual decline in influence of the 'right' wing of the British Labour Party over the course of the 1970s and into the 1980s. The pervasive feelings of disappointment that had materialised during the final years of Harold Wilson's first term in office, when industrial unrest raged and the Government's economic policies had gone awry, led to the rise of a more militant 'left' wing that borrowed freely from Marxist ideas and made no pretence of being satisfied by the constraints of 'responsible' government. By the time Labour lost the 1970 general election, the party had entered the beginnings of a new phase of considerable turmoil. Its parliamentary body was beset by numerous disagreements on policy, which created a situation that was particularly difficult for the right of the party; for as well as battling left-wing militancy they also had to contend with the fact that many of the principles underlying Labour's role in the post-war consensus had been articulated and championed by them. Although they continued to defend their position, the continuing failures of government and the difficulties created by a wide array of new challenges helped spread dissension within their own ranks, thereby revealing deep fault lines that contributed to a growing sense of overall unease and disunity.

How is the Labour ‘right’ to be defined? On one level, the term can be used purely in an oppositional sense, to refer to those who were not of the party’s more explicitly socialist ‘left’. Indeed, at times the chief utility of the term seemed to be that it allowed its adherents to define themselves by what they were *not*: Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, for example, suggest that the Labour right simply consisted of those politicians and activists ‘who did not think of themselves as left-wingers and did not belong to left-wing organizations such as the Tribune Group or the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy.’<sup>1</sup> It is this ongoing battle between left and right, and their perceived incompatibility within a political system that obliged them to work together in opposition to the ruling Conservative Party, that has led to a situational understanding of factionalism within the party – a process that was aided by the emergence of senior politicians in the 1940s, most notably Aneurin Bevan and Hugh Gaitskell, who were often caricatured as personifying these two extremes. To complicate matters further, the party has also played host to a ‘centre’ – a much less tangible grouping that is usually considered to be the fulcrum between the right and the left, which served as a clearing ground for compromise (especially useful for the leadership) and allowed for ideological flexibility and movement across the party’s ideological spectrum.

At a very basic level, however, divisions between right and left in the party can also be explained in terms of general ideological objectives: whereas the Labour left has preached the introduction of an explicitly socialist society through parliamentary means, the right has remained attached to corrective reform of the existing capitalist system within a ‘social-democratic’ framework. More specifically, to be on the ‘right’ of the Labour Party entailed support for the ‘revisionist’ tendency within the party, which advocated a ‘mixed economy’ model of public and private ownership, a programme of social reform, and Keynesian

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<sup>1</sup> Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford, 1995), p. 105.

theories of economic management. This ‘revisionism’ essentially has its roots in the works of the German political theorist Eduard Bernstein, who was the first to define social-democracy (in its modern incarnation) as something separate from socialism. It was Bernstein who broke away from orthodox Marxism by advocating a political philosophy that implicitly accepted bourgeois capitalism and empiricism, and it was he who argued that the motive force in history was evolutionary change rather than revolutionary transformation. His approach influenced many in the Labour Party from its very beginning, but it was only in the period following the Second World War that a number of younger politicians attempted to synthesise the outcomes of Bernstein’s thinking with their own analyses. Chief among them were Evan Durbin, Douglas Jay and Anthony Crosland, each of whom wrote several influential books which attempted to situate their contributions to social-democratic thought in the context of modern Britain. Under the patronage of Hugh Gaitskell, party leader from 1955 to 1963, revisionism became a highly influential body of thought and set of policies within the party. Those who followed it were so committed to these ideas that they shaped their own identity as ‘revisionists’ on the basis of them.

But there is, however, another variant of ‘right-wing identity’, an *alter ego* which was opposed to the left but which did not share the explicitly intellectual roots of revisionism. Defining this group has proved difficult, with some historians placing emphasis on the ‘consolidatory’ nature of the compromise-minded, unintellectual right, while others have referred to its capacity for loyalty to the wider labour movement and to its leaders. As it had no definable impact on the political doctrines of the party, for the most part acceding to the social and economic policies pursued by the revisionists, the principal contribution of this element of the right has lain in its perceived refusal to ally with revisionism once the latter began to lose control of the party, especially if historic goals or totems were deemed to be at risk from revisionist calls for ‘reform’. The nature of this ‘non-revisionist right’, as Leon

Epstein calls it, can be (and has been) viewed as simply another way of describing the aforementioned ‘centre’ of the party, given the common perception that both were perceived as essentially ‘unideological’ in nature and loyal to the party leadership. However, in my thesis I have rejected using this term, due to the fact that denoting such a tendency as ‘centrist’ – i.e., equally apart from right and left – does not acknowledge the adherence to the revisionist programme that it displayed, nor the fact that during the factional disputes of the 1960s those associated with it supported the ‘Gaitskellites’ against the left. Instead, I have chosen to use the phrase ‘traditionalist’ right, citing its origins within the working-class, trade union-oriented electorate of the party as its chief characteristic and emphasising its existence as a mood or habit of mind rather than as any kind of organised unit. My preference for ‘traditionalist’ is in part because it had been used by other scholars, such as Tudor Jones, but also because it does not share the pejorative implications that can be found in terms such as ‘fundamentalist’ or ‘conservative’ right. I have also employed the term ‘Labourist’ when alluding to the theories of that name or mentioning specific aspects of historical trade union practice, but do not use it in the manner of the New Left – that is to say, by referring to the role that the Labour movement has supposedly played in collaborating with capitalism and impeding the revolutionary potential of the working class.<sup>2</sup>

Because the ‘traditionalist’ mode of the Labour right did not challenge revisionism in terms of doctrine, it is perhaps more profitable when speaking of the divisions between the two typologies to refer to questions of ‘ethos’ instead. Ethos, as defined by H.M. Drucker, is an aspect of political ideology that can be considered separate from doctrine; it is, rather, a collective spirit that permeated the Labour movement and developed its understanding of what a socialist society should be like.<sup>3</sup> ‘Ethical socialism’, mentioned in chapter one, was a

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<sup>2</sup> See also chapter one.

<sup>3</sup> H.M. Drucker, *Doctrine and Ethos in the Labour Party* (London, 1979).

separate tradition in early twentieth-century political thought, which gradually converged with the more practical and instrumentalist sensibilities of revisionist social-democracy. Revisionism thus inherited an explicitly ethical approach in partnership with its economic doctrines, which reformulated socialist aims in terms of their impact on the goodness of mankind and the wellbeing of society. Ultimately, for social-democracy to have any meaning, it had to consist of a collection of ideals towards which all its adherents would hope to advance.

The principal ethical dimension of revisionism was the commitment of its adherents to equality, which Anthony Crosland in particular enshrined as the guiding principle for socialism as a whole. Alan Warde, among others, argues that Crosland's reading of equality was primarily based on sociological concepts relating to class rather than structural economic theory.<sup>4</sup> Eradicating differences in class status were regarded as the means by which equality could be achieved, and many of the revisionists' doctrinal processes – such as income redistribution and progressive taxation – were formulated to achieve that end. But there remained two other ethical considerations which can also be considered as essential to understanding revisionism. One was a belief in the application of reason, favoured by Gaitskell, which can be interpreted as the conscious advance towards enlightened progress and also as one of the bases for the objective, evidence-led doctrine upon which revisionism depended. It was an insistence on reason that led revisionists to pursue modernity as an end in itself, alongside a complementary dislike of the archaic and the outdated. There was secondly an acknowledgement among revisionists of the need for freedom. In Evan Durbin's works this was manifested as a veneration for British parliamentary democracy, but by the 1970s the need to defend individual liberties and human rights was deemed to be more important.

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Warde, *Consensus and Beyond: The Development of Labour Party Strategy since the Second World War* (Manchester, 1982), p. 49.

This thesis is therefore best understood as an examination of conflicting ideas and ideals, as revisionism sought to ‘revise’ itself throughout the 1970s in the face of a number of challenges. It consists of three separate aims. The first is simply to illustrate the various events and phenomena that led to lasting divisions among the right in the 1970s. Two issues in particular acted as catalysts for the release of underlying tensions, both of which predated the decade. One was the question of entry into the European Economic Community (EEC), which saw the right divide into opposing pro- and anti-EEC tendencies. The other was the attempted introduction of various forms of incomes policy, viewed as an imperative by certain social-democrats<sup>5</sup> but considered to be a violation of trade union prerogatives elsewhere. In addition, there were further developments throughout the decade which led the right to turn against itself, such the ongoing rivalry between cliques in the party’s parliamentary body, the advent of the sterling crisis in 1976, and – eventually – the prospect of a ‘realignment’ of the centre-left of the political spectrum that threatened to split the social-democrats in two.

The second aim is to discover how far the Labour right’s divisions were a reflection of its existing political identities. These divisions existed on two separate planes: as a rupture within revisionism itself and as differences between revisionism and traditionalism. The first is easier to identify, as debates between revisionists often concerned important policy issues, and many of their conflicts were thus reducible to matters of doctrinal opposition. Splits within revisionism also concerned personalities, and as chapter four will show, revisionists in parliament had a tendency to gravitate towards parliamentary leaders, much as they had done with Gaitskell. Determining the relationship between revisionism and traditionalism is much harder, as the lack of differences concerning doctrine renders it difficult to make definitions or comparisons. The divergences between the two groups, such as they were, often concerned

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<sup>5</sup> In the context of this thesis, the terms ‘right-winger’ and ‘social-democrat’ are used synonymously.

matters of tone and style, of emphasis and degree, but that did not stop there still being considerable room for overlap: many self-defined revisionists had as much feeling for Labour Party traditions as the stereotypical loyalist, traditional-minded backbencher, while the unideological nature of traditionalism did not necessarily preclude an interest in ideas or participation in intellectual activity. One feature that does distinguish traditionalism, however, is its explicitly working-class outlook, which manifested itself in support for the trade unions as the main vehicle of proletarian consciousness. This was often unfavourably compared to the middle-class background of the revisionist leaders.

It was questions regarding ethics that perhaps most frequently led to tension between the revisionist and traditionalist tendencies, and the third and final aim of this thesis is to explore the impact that the ethical dimension of political thought, and in particular the three ethics of equality, liberty and reason, had on right-wing unity. Many self-described revisionists in particular found it hard, by the 1970s, to reconcile the ongoing quest for social equality – and the levels of government intervention that required – with the equally important need for individual freedom. Moreover, while the traditionalist mindset accepted the importance of revisionist ethics, it often came to differing conclusions as to their meaning. So, on the defining issue of equality, for example, voices within Labour (on the left as well as the right) preferred to focus on preserving the exceptional status of the working class and disdaining any perceived bias against them, which militated against the ‘classless society’ that the revisionists were aiming for. Meanwhile, the emphasis on adhering to reason – leaving aside the fact that there was not always a consensus among even the revisionists as to what was rational – could be at odds with the impulses that sprang from the movement’s collective and proletarian identities. Together, these alternative viewpoints contributed to the intellectual fragmentation of the Labour right, demonstrating that a non-revisionist understanding of ethos could challenge the ideals of revisionism in practice if not in theory.

Given the focus on identity, it is fair to say that people matter in this thesis as much as ideas do. However, most previous studies of this subject have focused either on the select corpus of thinkers responsible for establishing the foundations of revisionist thought – e.g., Jay, Durbin, Crosland – or on the parliamentary party’s leading figures, especially those ‘heavyweights’ who were seen as personifying the Labour right in government (such as Roy Jenkins, James Callaghan and Denis Healey). It is correct, of course, for any analysis to concentrate on such *dramatis personae*, given their importance, but I have tried to cast the net wider by highlighting certain political issues and developments – for example, industrial democracy, or the campaign for a referendum on EEC membership – which brought forth contributions from engaged (but much lesser known) backbenchers. I have also attempted to include insights from those figures on the right who existed outside of the narrow world of Westminster politics, an amorphous group which includes, among others, a journalist (Peter Jay, son of Douglas), a grassroots activist (Stephen Haseler), a trade union leader (Frank Chapple), and an industrial relations theorist (Allan Flanders). It is in seeking to articulate this diverse range of outlooks that I have resorted to using several archived collections of private papers as my main primary sources, in the hope that they will unearth some previously ignored material.

It is also worthwhile to establish briefly what the thesis is *not* trying to achieve. As it is a study of how and why the Labour right was divided within itself, and focuses primarily on the ideas and identities that existed among them, it refrains from any close study of their collective efforts to fight left-wing opponents for control of the party’s institutional apparatus, which became a dominant preoccupation within the parliamentary party in the period following the October 1974 general election. This is because the factional groups that took part in the so-called ‘fightback’ were often focused on maintaining unity in the face of adversity, and had little desire to debate ideology when so much of their energy was

expended on maintaining their numerical strength in the constituencies, amongst the unions and on the party's numerous committees. As Dianne Hayter states in her own doctoral study of the Labour right, these exigencies meant that the likes of Labour First and the St. Ermins Group failed to develop any clear 'articulated philosophy', so as to maintain as wide a spectrum of support as possible.<sup>6</sup> The one partial exception to this is the Manifesto Group, one of the first of the explicitly right-wing parliamentary organisations, which tried to pioneer a more liberal form of revisionism in the late 1970s without much success; its story is recounted in chapter four (see below).

This thesis has been structured into six separate chapters. The opening chapter is a closer investigation of what has briefly been described above, focusing on the historiography that underpins existing studies of the right and the definitions that have been employed by contemporary historians, political scientists and Labour politicians themselves to categorise the differences contained within it. Revisionism as a body of doctrine is explained in greater detail, as are the three ethical foundations of revisionist thought. The roots of traditionalism are also discussed, emphasising its nature as an alternative identity on the right. However, while the two aspects of right-wing identity were very real, conflicting viewpoints on ethics and the appeal of both tendencies meant that divisions were frequently blurred when it came to individual identities. By focusing on these dimensions, this first section establishes the two different axes which form the backbone of all subsequent chapters (bar the last): namely, the distinctions between revisionism and traditionalism, and the role of the three ethical strains of ideology as harbingers of confusion and dissension, as much as of unity.

Both the second and third chapters examine the two great issues that had the potential to rip the Labour party apart – 'Europe' and the trade unions. The debates over Britain's

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<sup>6</sup> Dianne Hayter, 'The Fightback of the Traditional Right in the Labour Party, 1979 to 1987', unpublished PhD thesis, Queen Mary, University of London (2004), p. 8.

efforts to join the European Economic Community (EEC) affected the right as much as the left, and transcended the split that already existed between revisionism and traditionalism. The roots of this division lay in Hugh Gaitskell's decision to oppose EEC entry in 1962, which left him at odds with many of his closest followers for the first time. This chapter analyses the impact of these divisions in the 1970s, both during the debates that surrounded the successful third application to join the EEC in 1971, and then in the period leading up to and including the referendum of 1975. Chapter three discusses the fracturing of the relationship between the Labour Party and the trade unions amid deteriorating industrial relations, and the differing conclusions that prevailed among the right as to how such a state of affairs could be rectified. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the focus was on pragmatic reform of existing structures, in the hope of establishing a new concordat that would ease the tensions which had been building up: these included various attempts at a prices-incomes policy, culminating in the advent of the 'social contract' in 1975, and the rather more esoteric idea of workers' participation in management.

The fourth and fifth chapters examine new ways of thinking that evolved within revisionism once it was in 'crisis'. Chapter four begins with a description of the polarisation that emerged between Roy Jenkins and Anthony Crosland – a break that was initially caused by their careerist rivalry and divergent positions on the European question, but which progressed to form two competing worldviews that differed as much in tone and emphasis as in content. It then goes on to describe the dissatisfaction of several Jenkinsites with Labour's performance in government, which led them to consider alternative possibilities for rejuvenating their creed, incorporating libertarian elements that they felt had been ignored by Croslandite social-democracy. The following chapter focuses on another element of the right that came to quite different conclusions, spearheading a new 'populist' dimension of egalitarianism as the way forward for Labour in the 1970s. The inspiration for this group, led

by Stephen Haseler and eventually organised as the Social Democratic Alliance (SDA), was Gaitskell himself, whom Haseler viewed as embodying the hostility to élites that fuelled his own dissatisfaction with contemporary revisionism, and which took both him and his supporters on a journey towards the fringes of the party.

The final chapter is different from the others, in that it moves away from the Labour Party and towards the Social Democratic Party (SDP), a new breakaway organisation established in 1981 as an intended refuge for those revisionists who yearned for a political realignment. Escaping the hard-left of the party was one of the defectors' key aims, but so too was getting rid of the party's 'Labourist' inclinations, which – as the numerous disagreements over industrial policy had demonstrated throughout the previous decade – preoccupied sections of the Labour right. This need to divest themselves of historic alliances ensured that the original ethic of the SDP was its sense of 'newness' – a value that celebrated modernity in general and the party's role as a rupturing, innovative force in British politics in particular. However, the Social Democrats' hopes of creating a 'clean slate' away from their Labour Party origins were frustrated by the perspectives held by several of its new members; thus, any novel impact that the party made in the political arena was often undercut by the need to reconcile itself to its past.

### **Literature Review**

There is a substantial corpus of work that has been written on the Labour Party since its foundation, but very few have attempted to examine its right wing as a separate entity from the rest of the party: as Eric Shaw has lamented, it has, quite simply, 'attracted less scholarly

interest than the left.’<sup>7</sup> One book that does focus on the right is Stephen Meredith’s book *Labours Old and New: The Parliamentary Right of the Labour Party 1970–79 and the Roots of New Labour*.<sup>8</sup> Meredith analyses many of the same issues that occupy this thesis, including the divisions caused within the right by the move towards membership of the EEC, the threat posed to the post-war consensus by the trade unions, and the sense of defeat and decay that undermined ‘old-style’ revisionism by the end of the decade. His book also analyses additional phenomena that are not featured in this thesis, most notably the connections that exist between the post-war revisionist vision and the brand of politics promoted by New Labour in the 1990s.

Meredith’s book is particularly adept at exploring the different typologies that have been produced within the academic community to describe the various different categories of right-wing identity. This, of course, makes him aware of the internal antagonism that existed between revisionists and ‘Labourists’, but concludes – as this thesis also does – that these were not strictly delineated groups so much as overlapping tendencies, which remained fluid and were themselves subject to fracture and tension. However, his work conforms to many of the protocols required by political science, and therefore relies heavily on secondary literature rather than primary sources. Although there are interviews in the book with several key figures on the right they are often used ineffectively, with sizeable chunks of text reproduced without any accompanying analysis. Only a select few collections of private papers were investigated, thus limiting Meredith’s ability to go beyond standard narratives, while his focus on the parliamentary right – as opposed to the wider milieu of journalism, academia and political activism – unfortunately ensures that not many voices are heard from outside the confines of Westminster.

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<sup>7</sup> Eric Shaw, ‘Book Review: *Labours Old and New: The Parliamentary Right of the Labour Party 1970–79 and the Roots of New Labour*’, *Party Politics*, 16:6 (2010), p. 852.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Meredith, *Labours Old and New: The Parliamentary Right of the Labour Party 1970–79 and the Roots of New Labour* (Manchester, 2008).

If books on the Labour right are scanty, then studies of the revisionist doctrine which formed the basis of its identity are much more common. This is because revisionism played host to a body of reputable thinkers, each of whom left behind a canon of work that has been subjected to closer interrogation. Three books that attempt to dissect the nature and development of revisionism are *Intellectuals and Socialism: 'Social Democrats' and the Labour Party* by Radhika Desai, *Remaking the Labour Party: From Gaitskell to Blair* by Tudor Jones, and *The Labour Party's Political Thought* by Geoffrey Foote.<sup>9</sup> The latter includes several chapters on the revisionists as part of a greater work on the party's entire intellectual history, charting three separate phases of revisionist development of which only the last ('Revisionism in Crisis') correlates with the period under consideration by this thesis. Desai and Jones's works, on the other hand, are specific accounts of the revisionists' ambitions to adapt the Labour Party into a force for progress in the modern world. Desai, whose work is written from a critical left-wing perspective, creates a narrative arc that ends with the final disintegration of revisionism towards the end of the 1970s, at the time of the Winter of Discontent and before the schism that led to the birth of the SDP, while Jones (like Meredith) explores the continuities that led to the rise of New Labour over a decade later. Both books are naturally interested in doctrine, but Desai makes it more explicit by stressing the role of intellectuals in consciously fashioning revisionism as a project. This, of course, has its limits as a rationale, for it restricts discussion to the role played by a select number of individuals while largely excluding the bulk of people who identified with the right but did not leave behind them a definable intellectual legacy. More importantly, Desai's work presents the revisionist intellectuals as co-ordinators of a unified, consistent project that was intent on imposing their hegemony on the party; but, as Brian Brivati has suggested, such

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<sup>9</sup> Radhika Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism: 'Social Democrats' and the Labour Party* (London, 1994); Tudor Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party: From Gaitskell to Blair* (London, 1996); Geoffrey Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought: A History* (London, 1985).

didactic reasoning is problematic, for many of the revisionists who featured in the book did not always agree with each other or act in tandem, a heterogeneity that Desai chooses to downplay in her narrative.<sup>10</sup>

Another book with a quite different orientation is *Fightback! Labour's Traditional Right in the 1970s and 1980s*, written by Dianne Hayter and published in 2005.<sup>11</sup> Hayter, a former general secretary of the Fabian Society, had been close to several moderate union leaders during her career, leaving her in a position to observe the changing nature of the right at a pivotal time in its history. One of the merits of her book is that it concentrates not just on parliamentarians but on trade unionists, whose loyalty to the Labour Party as the vehicle for working-class interests leads her to label this dimension of the Labour right as its 'traditional' wing. Unfortunately, her focus is mostly on the early to mid-1980s, when the right's numbers in parliament were depleted and its fortunes looked to be at its weakest. Not only is that period largely beyond the scope of this thesis, but Hayter's book refrains from analysing the nature of social-democracy; indeed, her book is not a study of the right's ideological development but of its numerous factions as they emerged in the late 1970s, and the activities they co-ordinated to prevent the hard left from gaining control of the party's democratic structures. This, as Judith Bara suggests, ensures that there is no proper explanation of the traditional right's character, at least not beyond the contention that its adherents stayed in Labour to fight their corner rather than defect to the SDP.<sup>12</sup>

There are, however, two other books which are invaluable in at least determining the roots of the traditionalist or Labourist viewpoint as it existed in the 1970s, for they were written by Labour Party figures who recognised its existence as key to the party's future development. The first is *The Gaitskellites*, one of the original surveys of the revisionists in

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<sup>10</sup> Brian Brivati, 'Revisionists', *Socialist History*, 9 (1996), pp. 10-1.

<sup>11</sup> Dianne Hayter, *Fightback! Labour's Traditional Right in the 1970s and 1980s* (Manchester, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> See also Judith Bara, 'Book Review: *Fightback! Labour's Traditional Right in the 1970s and 1980s*', *Party Politics*, 14:6 (2008), p. 767.

their heyday, written by Stephen Haseler and published six years after Hugh Gaitskell's death.<sup>13</sup> In this book, Haseler invested in Gaitskell many of the ideal qualities that he believed contributed to the success of revisionism as a coherent political doctrine. In particular, he emphasised what he saw as Gaitskell's role in promoting a 'populist' form of social-democracy, which pursued a series of reformist objectives 'based upon working-class aspirations' that appealed not just to his fellow revisionists but to the right's Labourist element as well.<sup>14</sup> In a subsequent Fabian pamphlet, written with John Gyford, he elaborated on these points further, explicitly contrasting 'Labourist-populism' (as he and Gyford now called it) with an alternative 'liberal socialism' that the authors portrayed as the other 'half' of revisionism, which only Gaitskell – in their reading – had managed to successfully bring together under his command.<sup>15</sup> This was, however, a highly subjective viewpoint, which idealised Gaitskell's egalitarian and demotic instincts at the expense of his liberal, rational perspectives.

The second book is *The Progressive Dilemma*, by the former Labour MP and historian David Marquand.<sup>16</sup> Essentially a collection of essays on left-wing political figures, one of its contentions was that the Labour Party was fatally immobilised by its dedication to the values of Labourism, which Marquand interprets as the development of the party as a vehicle for the labour interest – or, to put it more simply, as a 'trade union party'. Marquand believed that even Labour's socialist intellectuals shaped the contours of their doctrines to suit the interests of a movement that was 'created, financed and, in the last analysis, controlled by a highly decentralised trade union movement.' He further argued that the ethos of the trade unions – its symbols, rituals, memories, and above all its defensive character –

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen Haseler, *The Gaitskellites: Revisionism in the British Labour Party, 1951-64* (London, 1969).

<sup>14</sup> Haseler, *Gaitskellites*, p. ix.

<sup>15</sup> John Gyford and Stephen Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, Fabian Research Series 292 (London, 1971).

<sup>16</sup> David Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1999).

has historically influenced Labour for the worse, leaving its intellectual caste unable to adapt to changing circumstances by formulating new theories and positions that would allow it to win general elections. In an earlier *Encounter* essay on the same themes (published in 1979), Marquand identified the party's 'old Right' as one of the culprits responsible for maintaining this hostile climate – an ambiguous and never properly defined term, but one which was meant to include any right-winger who did not understand the perilous position of social-democracy and its need for intellectual regeneration.<sup>17</sup>

Haseler and Marquand came from conflicting social-democratic traditions: the former had originally celebrated Labourism as the mechanism by which the working-class would retain their influence within the movement, while Marquand – who conformed to Haseler's 'liberal socialist' archetype – repudiated proletarianism as an ignoble force that vitiated the Labour Party's spirit. Yet these two figures at least tried to understand the consequences of Labourism for the unity of the right – even if one was not wholly of it and the other was stridently critical of it. Moreover, despite their apparently opposing viewpoints, both Haseler and Marquand agreed on several aspects of 'liberal' economic policy and the need for radical change, and together they ended up as founder members of the SDP. Their example illustrates how doctrine can differ from ethos (see below), allowing people to concur on key issues and reach similar conclusions while maintaining completely separate worldviews.

Haseler and Marquand's output also illustrates another hazard that complicates any study of the Labour right: the fact that many of those who have written about the subject have also been involved in the political fray themselves, and have as a consequence often struggled to achieve impartiality when writing about their subject. Haseler, for example, articulated the 'Labourist-populist' concept in the hope of keeping the Gaitskellite brand of revisionism

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<sup>17</sup> David Marquand, 'Inquest on a Movement: Labour's Defeat and its Consequences', *Encounter*, July 1979.

alive in the 1970s, even establishing his own factional group, the Social Democratic Alliance (see chapter five). He could also be polemical when attacking his enemies both on the left and on the right, and he was rarely conscientious enough to check if his various thoughts and notions cohered with each other; this has left his later books on the Labour Party subject to some criticism, with many academic reviewers (such as Patrick Seyd and Barbara Wootton) arguing that they were excessively hyperbolic in tone and lacking in perspective.<sup>18</sup> Marquand, on the other hand, was far more rigorous as an academic, and he frequently achieved an objectivity that Haseler could not manage. Even so, his argument that the party was condemned to live in the shadow of the movement's industrial wing was conceived at a time when he had only recently been involved in battling for its soul as a follower of Roy Jenkins. It is not absurd, therefore, to suggest that the perspectives of both men were coloured by the emotional turmoil of the period, making it worthwhile to remind oneself that they are describing their own personal viewpoints and prejudices as much as they are impartially chronicling the existence of a strain of political consciousness.

Both Marquand and Haseler, through their respective commentaries, manage to create a greater understanding of what the alternative, 'traditionalist' identity on the Labour right might have been like. As mentioned above, Marquand's book relies on notions of 'ethos' in order to depict the challenge that Labourism presented to the party's intellectuals. This notion derives directly from the work of H. M. Drucker, who examines the importance of ethos in understanding the party's ideology. In his book *Decline and Ethos in the Labour Party* Drucker defines these concepts as the two separate constituent parts of the party's ideological framework; while he presents 'doctrine' as the programme that the party presents to the electorate and the texts that underpin it, 'ethos' is considered to be something else entirely –

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<sup>18</sup> Patrick Seyd, 'Book Review: *The Death of British Democracy*', *Political Quarterly*, 47:4 (1976), pp. 493-5; Barbara Wootton, 'The Future of the Labour Party', *London Review of Books*, 18 December 1980.

the spirit of the party and the values that it lives by, which are based on the past traditions and rituals that emerged from the movement's collective experiences.<sup>19</sup> Drucker's observation that Labour is, by its very nature, a party devoted to its past is an important insight into the character of Labourism, but it is in creating the idea of ethos as an alternative, non-intellectual dimension of party ideology that this book acquires its fundamental importance. For in doing so, it allows the party's values, myths, traditions and understandings to be examined as an accompaniment to doctrine, allowing those who understood ideology in this manner to be subject to scrutiny as well.

As well as 'ethos' there are also ethics, which can be used to identify exactly what particular values animated this wing of the movement. In this thesis, three have been identified as underpinning revisionist thought: equality, liberty and reason. Several academics have tried in recent years to examine the ethical dimension of social-democratic ideology, with writers such as Jeremy Nuttall analysing themes such as 'character' in order to understand the values that revisionists wanted for society.<sup>20</sup> One who has been successful in exploring the confines of egalitarianism in particular is Nicholas Ellison, in his book *Egalitarian Thought and Labour Politics*, which identifies three different strands that existed in the party.<sup>21</sup> While these all relate to explicitly intellectual categories, the book makes the key point that there were different visions within the party about what equality might mean. For some, it was about ensuring equality of opportunity, whereas for others it was about establishing a technocracy that would ensure equality of outcome. But Ellison also identifies a 'qualitative socialism', which aimed at improving human relationships and was closely related to the 'ethical socialism' pioneered by R. H. Tawney. It was this aspect that interested Crosland in particular, and his own enquiries into the nature of class in British society

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<sup>19</sup> Drucker, *Doctrine and Ethos in the Labour Party*.

<sup>20</sup> Jeremy Nuttall, 'Labour Revisionism and Qualities of Mind and Character, 1931-79', *English Historical Review*, cxx: 487 (2005), pp. 667-94.

<sup>21</sup> Nicholas Ellison, *Egalitarian Thought and Labour Politics* (London, 1994).

became instrumental to a wider understanding of equality that rested on social rather than purely economic relations. This, in turn, contributed to a tension between visions of ‘classlessness’ and an alternative ideal that saw the promotion of working-class values as the route to ensuring parity with their social superiors.

When it comes to the issues that confronted and divided the Labour right in the 1970s, there is a wealth of literature available. On the perplexing question of European unity, a key text is *Labour’s European Dilemmas* by Roger Broad, who had been involved with the Labour Committee for Europe in the 1960s and was personally acquainted with many of its leading activists.<sup>22</sup> As such a background suggests, though, his preoccupation is with the pro-Market forces within the Labour Party, and although he pays attention to anti-EEC arguments there is little acknowledgement of those on the right who contributed to them, such as Douglas Jay. This is also the case with Stephen Meredith’s essay ‘A Catalyst for Secession?’, which examines the rift within the Labour right over Europe but only in very generic terms.<sup>23</sup> Meredith’s analysis focuses on the high politics of the debates regarding entry, especially the roles played by Crosland, Jenkins, Healey and Callaghan, and while this leads to some worthwhile insights (such as the fact that Crosland had grown increasingly hostile to his own side on account of its perceived ‘elitist’ tendencies) he ultimately ignores the contributions made by a whole host of other participants from both the pro- and anti-EEC contingents. Equally, his attempts to explain the impact that the debates had on the existing divide between revisionist and ‘Labourist’ wings of the right is largely superficial, focusing on personalities and never getting to the heart of the underlying dynamics and arguments that animated those on both sides. The divisions caused by the European question have also been written about by two other historians, Harry Lazer and Lynton Robins, but unfortunately both

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<sup>22</sup> Roger Broad, *Labour’s European Dilemmas: from Bevin to Blair* (Basingstoke, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Meredith, ‘A Catalyst for Secession? European Divisions on the Parliamentary Right of the Labour Party 1962–72 and the Schism of British Social Democracy’, *Historical Research*, 85 (2012), pp. 329–51.

perceive the anti-Market ‘fundamentalist’ wing to be primarily of the left, thus failing to note that anti-élitism and populism were prevalent feelings among sections of the Labour right as well.<sup>24</sup>

On the issue of the relationship between the trade unions and the Labour Party, a fundamental text is Robert Taylor’s book the *Trade Union Question in British Politics: Government and Unions since 1945*, which – as the title suggests – casts an eye over half a century of political and industrial history.<sup>25</sup> The broad sweep of the book’s narrative, however, does not prevent it from forensically surveying the tensions and strains that enveloped the movement during the turbulent 1970s. As a prominent journalist at the time, Taylor has done a worthwhile job of articulating the differing perspectives that existed between the unions and the Labour administrations of the 1960s and 1970s; his analysis is especially insightful when analysing the effects of the ‘social contract’, which saw a number of *ad hoc* innovations take place as both the Government and key union leaders tried to keep it afloat during a period of industrial tension. While Taylor takes the relationship between party and union into account, it is not his book’s central theme. That honour falls instead to another landmark publication, Lewis Minkin’s *The Contentious Alliance: Trade Unions and the Labour Party*, which surveys the history of the movement from the dawn of the twentieth century to the late 1980s.<sup>26</sup> Minkin’s book, which is written from a viewpoint sympathetic to the unions, includes a chapter on the attitudes of ‘Rightwing social democracy’ towards the party-union link. He finds that several revisionists in government had by the 1970s concluded that the unions were a major block on progress, and notes that a number of them were anxious to preserve individual freedoms in the face of union power. However, Minkin’s

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<sup>24</sup> Harry Lazer, ‘British Populism: The Labour Party and the Common Market Parliamentary Debate’, *Political Science Quarterly*, 91:2 (1976), pp. 259-77; Lynton Robins, *The Reluctant Party: Labour and the EEC, 1961-1975* (Ormskirk, 1979).

<sup>25</sup> Robert Taylor, *The Trade Union Question in British Politics* (Oxford, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance: Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 1991).

mostly critical attitude towards the Labour right means he is perhaps too one-sided in his approach; for example, he fails to take into account the genuine efforts by certain revisionists to envisage a form of industrial democracy that could potentially have improved workplace relations.

Of course, the Labour Party is not the only subject of this thesis. For the final chapter concerns itself with the SDP, and the trouble it had in reconciling the desire for an ethos that emphasised the ‘newness’ of its brand of social-democracy with the legacy that it had inherited from the Labour Party. There are many books and papers that have been written about the SDP, but two general histories that have remained eternally relevant are *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party*, which was written by two professors of politics at Essex University, Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, and a book by the journalist Ian Bradley entitled *Breaking the Mould? The Birth and Prospects of the Social Democratic Party*.<sup>27</sup> The former is generally regarded as the bible for anybody wishing to study the party: it is of a considerable size, and is based on a number of seminars and interviews with most of those who were closely involved in establishing the party, combining the resulting insights with an exhaustive amount of secondary research. Because of the intimacy of both Crewe and King to the leading participants, their book also incorporates a number of viewpoints that allow the reader to better understand the subjective reasonings that lay behind the decision by so many to break away from their original political home. Bradley’s book, which is much smaller, was published in the same year as the launch of the new party, so although this restricts its scope it is able to provide a wealth of detail on the logistics of the party’s creation and the machinations that went on behind closed doors.

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<sup>27</sup> Crewe and King, *SDP*; Ian Bradley, *Breaking the Mould? The Birth and Prospects of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford, 1981).

However, of the two books it is Crewe and King's offering that arguably has the greater flaws. The closeness of the authors to the chief protagonists makes them sympathetic to their overall point of view, with two unfortunate consequences. The first is that the book's analysis of the circumstances surrounding the party's conception is, in Mark Garnett's words, 'dominated by the personalities of the 'Gang of Four'', neglecting to take into account the wider body of political actors who were involved in its creation and who submitted their own ideas for what the party should look like.<sup>28</sup> Crewe and King also spend little time assessing the viability of the 'Mark II Labour Party' notion, beyond recording that it was quickly discarded by the party's leaders; instead, their focus is concentrated more heavily on the putative electoral alliance with the Liberal Party that the 'radical centrists' in the SDP wanted from the beginning. This lack of interest in what the authors regard as a failed strategy means that they spend little time assessing how the party's new variant of social-democracy intended to depart from the nostrums of Labour revisionism, while they also ignore the nostalgia which some in the party still had for the Labour Party's past. Bradley's book is superior on both of these themes, as it does not have the gift of hindsight and thus includes in its narrative most of the players who were present right at the beginning (including Marquand and Haseler, and others such as Evan Luard), not just the 'Gang of Four' and their intimates. Bradley also takes seriously the possibility that the party may have tried to capture the Labour vote as an unambiguously centre-left vehicle, thereby presenting a (momentarily) different picture of what the SDP could have been had it chosen to go in an alternative direction.

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<sup>28</sup> Mark Garnett, 'Crossing the Floor', *Government and Opposition*, 31:4 (1996), p. 518.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Variants of right-wing identity

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an elaboration on the complex nature of the Labour Party right as it entered the 1970s. As explained briefly in the introduction, the perception of the right has traditionally fallen into two different categories – the ‘revisionists’, a group of intellectuals and their followers who were deemed to be responsible for much of the party’s doctrine after the wars, and an alternative tendency that has been defined in various ways, but which for reasons of simplicity are referred to throughout this thesis as the ‘traditionalists’. Alongside these two definitions, however, are a number of additional complications, and one of the intentions of this chapter is to explain not just the history but the historiography behind such terms. In particular, whereas revisionism can be attributed both to the body of political thought bearing that name and the people who articulated its precepts, traditionalism is a much vaguer idea with no clear boundaries or doctrinal profile. Thus, whereas discussion of revisionism in this chapter will largely focus on the output of a clearly defined group of socialist thinkers from the 1930s onwards, the alternative, traditionalist right will instead be analysed by looking at how scholars and politicians have sought to define this concept. Furthermore, this chapter also features an explanation of the assumptions behind ethical socialism, a philosophy articulated by R. H. Tawney that provided the revisionists with much of their idealistic outlook. Ethical socialism impregnated revisionism with an understanding of ideology that went beyond the doctrinal and material to the spiritual, and is a key

component of its ideology. However, the importance of ethics in the belief-system of social-democracy had an impact on the relationship with the traditional element of the right, as the latter agreed with these three ethics in principle but because of their separate foundation interpreted them rather differently.

### **Revisionism as doctrine**

‘Revisionism’ is a supple, flexible term, used in a general sense to refer to any deviation from core principles that takes place within a body of thought; the intellectual historian W.H. Greenleaf has argued that it is ‘synonymous with some form of reinterpretation of doctrine so critical as to amount (in the eyes of orthodoxy) to heresy or deviation.’<sup>29</sup> Initially, as Leopold Labedz observes, it was Eduard Bernstein’s ‘attempt to re-examine some of the original Marxian tenets’ that saw the specific emergence of revisionism as a recognisably coherent philosophy within Western socialism.<sup>30</sup> Bernstein had long been a prominent Marxist figure, but at the end of the nineteenth century he embraced a new mode of thinking that eventually became ‘a full-scale attack on Marx’s system’.<sup>31</sup> Observing that economic developments in Germany were failing to conform to Marxist predictions, he came to the conclusion that bourgeois democracy would not collapse as expected. In response, he substituted the dialectical method that was central to historical materialism in favour of an ‘evolutionism’

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<sup>29</sup> W.H. Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition, vol. 2: The Ideological Heritage* (London, 1983), p. 475.

<sup>30</sup> Leopold Labedz, ‘Introduction’, in Leopold Labedz (ed.) *Revisionism: Essays on the History of Marxist Ideas* (New York, 1962), p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein’s Challenge to Marx* (New York, 1962), p. 141.

that would ‘strengthen equally the realistic and the idealistic element in the socialist movement’.<sup>32</sup>

At the heart of Bernstein’s evolutionary model was the understanding that historical developments proceeded organically: mankind’s destiny would not be determined by spontaneous revolutionary struggle, nor was there any certainty that the inner contradictions of capitalism would allow for its systemic collapse. Bernstein thereby rejected Marx’s doctrines of class struggle and the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’, instead arguing for an ethically-based commitment to socialism that would unite all those in favour of combating social injustice, regardless of individual background.<sup>33</sup> Despite intending only to ‘revise’ Marxist theory in a way that would allow it to accommodate existing political practice, Bernstein’s attacks on his erstwhile mentor’s ideas ensured that his works would be received by critics as a ‘retreat from socialist goals and ambitions, a comfortable compromise with the *status quo* within capitalism and an acceptance of the limits of parliamentary democracy’.<sup>34</sup>

Although ‘revisionism’ has since been used to describe a number of different offshoots of Marxism, it is this equation of the term with Bernstein’s philosophy and the reformist politics it engendered that has, in Britain at least, come to predominate over all other forms of interpretation. By the 1950s the Labour Party had reached the stage where such influences were making considerable headway, led by a younger generation of politicians and thinkers who adopted the ‘revisionist’ moniker and, just like Bernstein, were attempting ‘to put socialism on a new basis in keeping with changed circumstances’.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, parallels can be drawn between these two separate manifestations of revisionist

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<sup>32</sup> Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation* (London, 1909), p. xviii.

<sup>33</sup> Dick Geary, ‘The Second International: Socialism and Social Democracy’ in Terence Ball and Richard Bellamy (eds), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 228-9.

<sup>34</sup> Manfred B. Steger, *The Quest for Evolutionary Socialism: Eduard Bernstein and Social Democracy* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 89-90; Radhika Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism: ‘Social Democrats’ and the Labour Party* (London, 1994), p. 66.

<sup>35</sup> Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism*, p. 66.

socialism, despite the fact they occurred 50 years apart: both arose at a time of relative prosperity and political reform, for instance, and were aided by strong working-class movements. Bernstein, who had once lived in Britain and was well known to many intellectuals within the British socialist community, had long had an influence on the party's leaders; Anthony Crosland, the most glittering of the Labour revisionists, even modelled himself on his illustrious German predecessor from an early age.<sup>36</sup>

Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to think that the character of Labourite revisionism was inherited primarily from the outcomes of a series of continental debates that had taken place even before the party was formed. For one thing, Labour's ideological background was very different from that of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) to which Bernstein belonged: whereas the latter institution was bound by an explicitly Marxist credo, Labour, in contrast, had been since its inception a party of strong democratic values, with a commitment to the parliamentary model of socialism. A gradualist conception of human development was key to its rationale, with leaders such as Ramsay MacDonald, the dominant figure in Labour politics during the inter-war period, arguing for his own 'evolutionary' form of socialism that others have likened to biological determinism.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the role of the Fabian Society, formed in 1884 and guided by the social reformers Sidney and Beatrice Webb, provided a reformist intellectual blueprint that revisionists in the party were to later adapt and claim as their own. The Webbs were dedicated to making socialism 'perfectly compatible with British political institutions and modes of behaviour', and their influence on indigenous political thought lay primarily in their statist, technocratic approach to governance, which would serve to guide the masses and ameliorate social conditions using a greatly strengthened

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<sup>36</sup> Susan Crosland, *Tony Crosland* (London, 1982), p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> James Jupp, 'The British Social Democrats and the Crisis of the British Labour Party', *Politics*, 16:2 (1981), p. 254; Anthony Wright, *British Socialism: Socialist Thought from the 1880s to the 1890s* (London, 1983), p. 76.

bureaucratic apparatus.<sup>38</sup> As Hugh Gaitskell, the first consciously ‘revisionist’ leader of the party, was to assert in 1956, it was within the Fabian tradition that ‘the most important intellectual contribution’ to the party was to be found during its formative years.

A further influence came from the vestiges of liberalism that the Labour Party either inherited or absorbed into its body of thought. As Duncan Tanner points out, ‘many Labour activists were rooted in a radical, ethical critique of the existing order which developed in the 1890s, largely from within the radical Nonconformist tradition’, which Peter Clarke depicts as absorbing both the radical liberalism of an earlier epoch and the ‘bourgeois socialism’ that came into vogue during the Edwardian period.<sup>39</sup> This ‘New Liberalism’ – typified in the popular imagination by economists such as J. A. Hobson and L. T. Hobhouse, as well as academics (Graham Wallas) and politicians (R. B. Haldane, Herbert Samuel) – was the *leitmotif* of the early twentieth-century Liberal administrations, which laid the foundations of the modern welfare state. But the most innovative and influential New Liberal of them all, John Maynard Keynes, was to emerge long after Labour had supplanted the Liberals as the main opposition to the Conservative Party. Appalled by the waste of human potential he witnessed during the 1930s Depression, Keynes devised a ‘general theory’ that would tackle the inadequacy of neo-classical economics in the face of global retrenchment. His policy solutions included deficit budgeting for the financing of public works and the encouragement of investment, both of which were encouraged as a means of restoring the ‘equilibrium’ that was necessary for sound public finances.

Within the Labour Party, enthusiasts for such interventionist ‘demand management’ were to be found on the esoteric reaches of the Labour Left, but after the failure of attempts by Sir Oswald Mosley and others to convert the leadership to their cause it was left to those at

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<sup>38</sup> Geoffrey Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought: A History* (London, 1985), pp. 27-8.

<sup>39</sup> Duncan Tanner, ‘Radicalism, Revisionism and Socialism’, in Eugenio F. Biagini and Alastair J. Reid (eds), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 272; Peter Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 1-9. .

the New Fabian Research Bureau (NFRB) – established in 1931 by the Oxford don and ‘guild socialist’ G.D.H. Cole as a forum for researchers to develop ideas and recommend them to the party’s National Executive Committee (NEC) policy sub-committee – to try and inject Keynes’s thinking into the bloodstream of the party.<sup>40</sup> In 1937 one of the Bureau’s young economists, Douglas Jay, published *The Socialist Case*, which was among the first major works to argue that Keynesian monetary and fiscal policy could be used for socialist purposes. In doing so he diverged significantly from orthodox assumptions in the party: rather than argue for the traditional goal of transforming capitalism through the expropriation and nationalisation of private property, Jay maintained that the objective of ‘practical socialism’ should be to prevent inequality by taxing ownership and wealth. He also urged policymakers to consider the management of ‘total effective demand’ as a means of limiting cyclical depressions and keeping unemployment low.<sup>41</sup> Other thinkers with links to the NFRB, such as Colin Clark and James Meade, had come to similar conclusions, and over the next decade the work of Keynes was to be of paramount importance in imbuing revisionist social-democracy with both the credibility and flexibility necessary for the improvements its protagonists wished to make.

Throughout the 1940s and into the early 1950s there was little tension between these initial revisionist arguments and more traditional socialist attitudes. The acceptance of collectivisation and state intrusion during wartime and the subsequent completion of the Attlee Government’s programme, as Tudor Jones explains, fostered a climate that allowed these ideas to be developed in a more systematic way.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, revisionism was not the only system of thought that held among the gradualists and reformists in the party. Leaving aside the continued presence of traditional socialist assumptions, many still adhered to the

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<sup>40</sup> Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism*, pp. 58-9; Tudor Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party: From Gaitskell to Blair* (London, 1996), p. 26. The NFRB was amalgamated into the Fabian Society in 1939.

<sup>41</sup> Douglas Jay, *The Socialist Case* (London, 1937).

<sup>42</sup> Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party*, p. 27.

‘consolidatory’ strategy espoused by one of Labour’s pioneers of municipal socialism, Herbert Morrison. Although supportive of nationalisation measures – indeed, Morrison was responsible for many of them while in government – the consolidators focused on what had already been achieved during the Attlee years, arguing for a refinement of existing policies before contemplating anything further. It was Labour’s narrow defeat at the 1951 General Election that cast both them and the fundamentalist Left adrift: the latter were no longer in a position to insist on further advances, while the relative conservatism of the consolidators left them taking much of the blame for the departing Government’s intellectual exhaustion.

The resulting hiatus – and the election of Hugh Gaitskell to the party leadership following Attlee’s retirement in 1955 – allowed the revisionists to assume a preeminent position in ‘full public limelight’ for the first time.<sup>43</sup> Having been viewed as little more than a donnish clique, they now assembled as an identifiable group with a coherent and distinctive identity. A foreshadow of what was to come arose with the publication in 1952 of *New Fabian Essays*, featuring contributions from important members of the forthcoming revisionist generation, such as Anthony Crosland, Roy Jenkins and Denis Healey.<sup>44</sup> Their focus was on creating ‘a new analysis of the political, economic and social scene as a basis for reformulating socialist principles’ at a time when ‘the problems of to-day are more complex and far-reaching than those of sixty years ago’ – thus signalling their willingness to oppose not just the Left but to depart from the tired assumptions of the ‘consolidators’ as well.<sup>45</sup> Both Gaitskell and John Strachey published their own attempts at revisionist pedagogy, but it is Crosland’s *The Future of Socialism*, written during a period of involuntary exile from the House of Commons following Labour’s second electoral defeat in 1955, which

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<sup>43</sup> Stephen Haseler, *The Gaitskellites: Revisionism in the British Labour Party, 1951-64* (London, 1969), p. 60.

<sup>44</sup> Haseler, *Gaitskellites*, pp. 62-5. Other revisionists who contributed to the *Essays* included the MPs Austen Albu and John Parker, and the academics Allan Flanders and Michael Young.

<sup>45</sup> R.H.S. Crossman and Margaret Cole, ‘Introduction’, in R.H.S. Crossman (ed.), *New Fabian Essays*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London, 1970), p. xiii.

came to be regarded in contemporary academic and political circles almost as the apotheosis of the revisionist project.

First published in 1956, the book was an ambitious attempt to synthesise many of the ideas that had preceded it over the previous two decades, providing a definitive and comprehensive blueprint for attaining radical change within the confines of the liberal economic model. Its primary argument was the notion that ‘classical capitalism’, whereby all means of production were in the control of an exploitative élite, had been eroded by the advent of the regulatory welfare state. Crosland suggested that this ‘statist’ model of control was gradually supplanting *laissez-faire*; by giving it authority over employment and output it would become ‘much less vulnerable to... the strains and stresses inherent in any industrial society’.<sup>46</sup> This new régime was, however, benevolent and not autocratic: capitalism could be used for ‘democratic-socialist’ objectives, which would be achieved without the suppression of privately-owned capital. Indeed, although the nationalised corporations were to Crosland a welcome feature of the post-war era, he argued that public interests were now so thoroughly entrenched in society there was no particular need to identify ‘socialism’ with state ownership at all.<sup>47</sup> He pointed out that the distribution of income was little affected by transferring industries to the state, and that major structural changes had contrived to direct economic power away from the capitalist class to a new breed of salaried managers, and in turn from management to labour as a result of full employment.<sup>48</sup> The purpose of Crosland’s output, therefore, was twofold: to demonstrate how the world had changed to the point where Marxist and traditional socialist thinking were no longer relevant to achieving progressive

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<sup>46</sup> C.A.R. Crosland, ‘The Transition from Capitalism’, in Crossman (ed.), *New Fabian Essays*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 43-4.

<sup>47</sup> Jose Harris, ‘Labour’s Political and Social Thought’, in Duncan Tanner, Nick Tiratsoo and Pat Thane (eds), *Labour’s First Century* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 34.

<sup>48</sup> C.A.R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (London, 1956), pp. 30-3, 72; Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party*, p. 30.

ends; and to enshrine the Keynesian-inspired ‘mixed economy’ paradigm, together with the advanced technocratic system that would accompany it.

His work was not received without criticism, however. The inference that capitalism had moved to a new, more progressive stage of development was unsurprisingly controversial, and the pages of *Tribune* (the newspaper of the party left) resonated to the sound of horror at Crosland’s ‘realism’.<sup>49</sup> Nor did his vision necessarily capture the hearts of all would-be modernisers in the party either: the work of Ilaria Favretto, for example, illustrates how a ‘centre-left technocratic kind of socialism’ also emerged during the 1950s, which provided a counterpoint to Crosland’s ideas by focusing attention on questions of economic efficiency, centralised planning and production, albeit in a ‘less doctrinaire’ fashion than the older ‘Bevanite’ Left had done.<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, Crosland’s prospectus became the intellectual ballast for the new ‘Gaitskellite’ era, and was soon incorporated into several policy documents – such as *Industry and Society* in 1957 – that underpinned the Labour right’s strategy over the next decade. In her analysis of *The Future of Socialism*, Radhika Desai states that ‘many who had read the book (and probably many others who hadn’t) found their way to socialism through its ideas’.<sup>51</sup> When the self-consciously right-wing Campaign for Democratic Socialism (CDS) was established by Gaitskell’s supporters in 1960 as a means of defeating the Bevanites, it was to Crosland’s work that they turned when seeking to give their group a doctrinal foundation; indeed, the man himself was even involved in drafting the Campaign’s manifesto, further illustrating how quickly his contributions had become viewed as an essential part of the revisionist identity.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Will Camp, ‘Socialism? How Dare He Use the Word!’, *Tribune*, 5 October 1956.

<sup>50</sup> Ilaria Favretto, ‘Wilsonism Reconsidered: Labour Party Revisionism, 1952-64’, *Contemporary British History*, 14:4 (2000), pp. 55, 57.

<sup>51</sup> Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism*, p. 83.

<sup>52</sup> Witness Seminar, ‘The Campaign for Democratic Socialism, 1960–64’, *Contemporary Record*, 7:2 (1993), p. 366; Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party*, p. 56.

### Revisionism and ‘ethical’ socialism

The ‘sociological’ and often materialistic nature of *The Future of Socialism*, and the clarity with which it chartered a route towards a particularly British variant of social-democracy, means that it is frequently viewed in the light of specific policy commitments the Labour Party subsequently made both when in power and in opposition. Consequently, several critics have tried to define revisionism as a managerialist and technocratic set of ideas, most notably the New Left *philosophe* Tom Nairn, who accused revisionists of worshipping economics as a ‘self-sufficient source of wisdom, a kind of unassailable technique’ rather than simply treating it as just ‘one part of a general vision of society and history’.<sup>53</sup> Some revisionists saw matters in a similar light: Hugh Gaitskell, for instance, was criticised by Roy Jenkins for attaching ‘too great an importance’ to economics, while the right-wing backbencher Arthur Palmer observed in 1962 that social-democrats were ‘much too prone to make an ideal of expertise’.<sup>54</sup>

Nonetheless, revisionism cannot be categorised simply as a body of policy-focused doctrine: not only did its resistance to dogma make it relatively unschematic, but its reliance on a shared set of ethical underpinnings – of wildly differing origins – made it more akin to a shared *disposition* than to a theory. Tudor Jones emphasises this by acknowledging that it was the emphasis on ‘certain values and ideals’ rather than structural changes in society that the Labour revisionists truly diverged from orthodox party thinking; Crosland’s ‘restatement of socialism’, he says, ‘was unmistakably ethical in tone’.<sup>55</sup> It is this dimension of Labour’s

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<sup>53</sup> Tom Nairn, ‘Hugh Gaitskell’, *New Left Review*, 25 (1964), p. 64.

<sup>54</sup> Roy Jenkins, ‘Hugh Gaitskell and His Life’, in W. John Morgan (ed.) *Politics and Consensus in Modern Britain: Lectures in Memory of Hugh Gaitskell* (London, 1988), p. 12; Arthur Palmer, ‘Leave it to the Expert?’, *Socialist Commentary*, March 1962.

<sup>55</sup> Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party*, pp. 35-6.

ideology that has been increasingly acknowledged in recent years, through the work of scholars such as Jones, Jeremy Nuttall and Martin Francis. The revisionists' vision, they argue, was to refashion society and change the way people led their lives; this required not just structural reform but a total transformation in underlying human relationships. Crosland was particularly engaged by this prospect, especially in terms of class relations: 'It would be agreeable', he opined in *The Future of Socialism*, if Englishmen could 'intermingle rather more freely and with rather less restraint than they do to-day, and if our social system generally were less fragmented and sub-divided'.<sup>56</sup>

Appropriately, given their preoccupation with personal and social values, many on the right thus considered themselves to be 'ethical socialists' as well as revisionists. The term as understood has a long history in Britain: its first paragons included Robert Owen, William Morris and Robert Blatchford, and by the early twentieth century the Independent Labour Party (ILP) – an eclectic accompaniment to the main party – had come to be regarded as the main conduit for this branch of thought. One early member of the ILP was R. H. Tawney, a young Oxford graduate whose political leanings had been decisively shaped by his formative experiences as an adult education tutor and, later, as a soldier in the trenches of the Somme battlefields. An economic historian by reputation, Tawney's role in the Labour movement was enhanced by a series of publications that articulated a coherent moral philosophy in the face of the world's problems.<sup>57</sup> Capitalism, in his eyes, was the biggest social evil of them all: it allowed individual gain and the rapacious quest for profit to triumph over any sense of social obligation, leading to the miseries of poverty, want and hunger. Private property although not a wrong in itself, was for Tawney a burden on society when it was inefficiently distributed and used as a source of income by the parasitical *rentier* class.

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<sup>56</sup> Crosland, *Future of Socialism*, p. 214.

<sup>57</sup> Alasdair Macintyre, 'The Socialism of R.H. Tawney', *New York Review of Books*, 30 July 1964.

His solutions primarily involved reviving social values and collective duty, rather than any assertion of individual rights. Such a society ‘would be based on union and co-operation, not division and mutual antagonism’.<sup>58</sup> This was a feeling influenced by Christian social teaching as much as by the Labour movement, and evinced an optimism and faith in the underlying goodness and ‘decency’ of the British people, rotten though their class-riven society was. These sentiments attracted hundreds of thousands of young idealists to Labour in the aftermath of the Second World War. As Norman Dennis and A. H. Halsey explain it in their survey of English ethical socialism, countless men and women were

confident that the democratic institutions invented by the Victorian and Edwardian working class, the trade unions, the co-operative societies and the Labour party, were the foundations of a free and socialist Britain, of the New Jerusalem... It did not require a total therapy of revolution and the massacre of their own countrymen. Resolve, pressure, argument, and firm insistence on democratic action would be repeatedly necessary over a long haul. But democracy and decency need never be abandoned.<sup>59</sup>

Dennis and Halsey also remark that Tawney was ‘sceptical of social ‘knowledge’ that departed very far from common sense, and [was] extremely wary of any morality that did not appeal to the conscience of the ‘decent man’.’<sup>60</sup> His socialism was imbued with a specific appeal – ‘not to mankind in general’, suggests his biographer, Anthony Wright, ‘but to the “political psychology” of people in a particular time and place’.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Foote, *Labour Party's Political Thought*, p. 76.

<sup>59</sup> Norman Dennis and A.H. Halsey, *English Ethical Socialism* (Oxford, 1988), p. xi.

<sup>60</sup> Dennis and Halsey, *English Ethical Socialism*, p. 184.

<sup>61</sup> Anthony Wright, *R.H. Tawney* (Manchester, 1987), p. 103.

Tawney's ethical mindset was preserved not just in his writings but in the activities of the Socialist Union (SU), a small, highly idiosyncratic 'sect' that latterly came to be regarded as the revisionists' conscience. Descended from a renegade German socialist *fraktion* that split from the SPD during the First World War, the Socialist Vanguard Group (as the Union was originally known) was guided by the rationalist ethics of the neo-Kantian philosopher and self-styled 'revolutionary revisionist' Leonard Nelson.<sup>62</sup> Originally intended as an élite organisation that would eschew Marxist, class-based materialism in favour of an almost spiritual belief in moral virtue and self-improvement, the British section of Nelson's following – led by the future industrial relations adviser Allan Flanders from the 1930s onwards – soon jettisoned the group's 'vanguard' pretensions and rapidly assimilated 'into the orbit of Labourism', affiliating as a socialist society to the Labour Party in 1942.<sup>63</sup> By the 1950s the group's followers – who now adopted the Socialist Union moniker in the hope of becoming more 'orthodox and inclusive'<sup>64</sup> – had largely rejected Nelson in favour of Tawney, transforming themselves into 'a body of intellectuals dedicated to advancing [his] philosophy of 'fraternity' and 'fellowship'.'<sup>65</sup> An adjunct of the SU that emerged during this time was *Socialist Commentary*, a monthly publication that evolved into a social-democratic 'house journal'. Edited by the former Secretary of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, Rita Hinden, its editorial board included Flanders and Margaret Cole, and during its 1950s heyday it elicited contributions from the likes of Gaitskell, Crosland, Patrick Gordon Walker and Denis Healey.

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<sup>62</sup> Lawrence Black, 'Social Democracy as a Way of Life: Fellowship and the Socialist Union, 1951-9', *Twentieth Century British History*, 10:4 (1999), pp. 500-1.

<sup>63</sup> Black, 'Social Democracy as a Way of Life', pp. 502-3; Richard Hyman, 'Flanders, Allan David (1910-1973)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 19 (2004), p. 994.

<sup>64</sup> R. M. Douglas, 'No Friend of Democracy: The Socialist Vanguard Group 1941-50', *Contemporary British History*, 16:4 (2002), p. 77.

<sup>65</sup> Harris, 'Labour's Political and Social Thought', p. 33.

These connections raise the question as to how much influence Tawney's form of socialism had over the subsequent direction of revisionism. Doctrinally, there seems to have been little direct engagement. Crosland only once made a substantial reference to Tawney's ideas in *The Future of Socialism*, to comment in passing on his belief that the competition and profit motive should be replaced by co-operation and state ownership, while Gaitskell jibed at his perceived inability to link theory with practice ('I cannot help feeling that... Professor Tawney himself becomes a trifle unrealistic about democracy').<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the gulf that existed between Tawney's conception of the 'good society' and what was being argued as policy by the Labour right – especially Keynesian theories, which lauded the profit motive that was so anathema to Tawney – did not go unnoticed in some quarters: Alasdair Macintyre, for instance, wondered if his teachings were compatible with a party that was 'increasingly the political expression not of workers, but of managers and technocrats'.<sup>67</sup> What seemed to be particularly missing from the Gaitskellite exegesis was any clear focus on community and fellowship, which for Tawney were the central tenets of socialism: although Crosland, for example, occasionally ruminated on how to improve personal relationships and the quality (as opposed to the standard) of living, he frequently assessed his proposals by measuring their impact on individual lives rather than their kinship groups and networks. It was left to only a few of his followers – most notably the 'social entrepreneur' Michael Young – to make an explicit case for social-democratic communitarianism on Tawneyite principles (see chapter six).

However, the goodwill and affection in which Tawney was held gives an indication of how strongly his moral sense was valued by the revisionists, who considered him one of their own; in an encomium (published after both men had died), Gaitskell praised Tawney as '*the*

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<sup>66</sup> Crosland, *Future of Socialism*, pp. 89-90; Hugh Gaitskell, 'Tawney's Essays', *New Statesman and Nation*, 21 February 1953.

<sup>67</sup> Macintyre, 'The Socialism of R.H. Tawney'.

Democratic Socialist *par excellence*', having already identified him as a forerunner of revisionism by his refusal to be 'dogmatic' about 'the form of ownership or control' in industry.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the explicitly moral strain of his thinking allowed revisionists to coalesce around a political strategy that, in Alan Warde's words, articulated a 'new kind of socialism, a socialism which required less a change of social structure than a change of attitude.'<sup>69</sup> The harmonisation of Tawney's ethical socialism with the contemporary thinking being pursued by Crosland was thus seen as the clearest route to 'modernising' social-democracy in the age of affluence.<sup>70</sup> This was reflected in the changed role of the SU, now firmly embodied in the revisionist mainstream – as Nicholas Ellison writes, 'If Tawney influenced the group's contemporary thinking about socialist principles, [their] choice of policies owed much to the relationship with the Gaitskellites'.<sup>71</sup>

What, then, were the distinctive ethical ideals that the revisionists pursued? The first and most important of these, as has already been alluded to in earlier passages, was *egalitarianism*. 'Socialists have always agreed', intoned *Twentieth Century Socialism*, 'that in the society they want all men would be equal; this they have regarded as the very essence of their creed'.<sup>72</sup> As a principle it was therefore beyond the reaches of compromise: Roy Jenkins put it best when he stated that 'Where there is no egalitarianism there is no socialism'.<sup>73</sup> It was in the acceptance of this value that all purportedly 'socialist' perspectives were as one – not just the revisionist and ethical strains, but every branch of thinking from the extremities of both left and right. The pursuit of 'equality' was thus understood to be a collective

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<sup>68</sup> Hugh Gaitskell, postscript to R.H. Tawney, *The Radical Tradition*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London, 1964), p. 212; Hugh Gaitskell, 'The Ideological Development of Democratic Socialism in Great Britain', *Socialist International Information*, 5:52-3 (1955), p. 935.

<sup>69</sup> Warde, *Consensus and Beyond*, p. 44.

<sup>70</sup> Ken Coates, *The Social Democrats: Those Who Left and Those Who Stayed* (Nottingham, 1983), p. 11.

<sup>71</sup> Nicholas Ellison, *Egalitarian Thought and Labour Politics* (London, 1994), p. 117.

<sup>72</sup> Socialist Union, *Twentieth Century Socialism* (Harmondsworth, 1956), p. 23.

<sup>73</sup> Roy Jenkins, 'Equality', in Crossman (ed.), *New Fabian Essays*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p. 69.

endeavour and not just a matter for individual conscience, endowing socialism with a specifically moral *raison d'être* that separated it even from enlightened liberalism.

Ellison, however, has made a distinction between ‘three visions’ of equality within Labour: on the Left stood the bastions of ‘technocratic socialism’, which ‘understood equality purely in terms of economic power’; then there was ‘qualitative socialism’, which employed ideas of fellowship or fraternity to ‘illuminate the egalitarian future’; and finally there was ‘Keynesian socialism’, which ‘envisaged a classless society of social, if not economic, equals enjoying a broad equality of opportunity’.<sup>74</sup> As we have seen, the legacy of Tawney allowed revisionists to embrace ‘qualitative’ arguments, so that even Douglas Jay – arguably the most technocratic of them all – spoke in *Socialism in the New Society* of a putative ‘world society’ that would be achieved through collective unity.<sup>75</sup> Crosland often focused on qualitative socialism in his writings, leading him to emphasise the struggle for human dignity as much as – if not more than – the structural inequalities of wealth and power.<sup>76</sup> In reality, however, it was the Keynesian vision that often gained the upper hand within the party: aiming towards government, the revisionists were always more likely to be sympathetic to ideas that not only prescribed a very specific set of aims but also bestowed on them a set of applied methods and policy tools. Jay, in particular, advocated the redistribution of wealth through state mechanisms that would eliminate inequalities, which involved a commitment to full employment, progressive taxation, and judicious use of planning structures.<sup>77</sup>

Equality was therefore at the centre of everything revisionists considered essential to their ‘socialist’ faith. Another important aspect of their ethos was their reverence for *freedom*. What that word meant depended on the context in which it was used. Gaitskell described it in his *Socialism and Nationalisation* (1956) as providing the ‘opportunities through which

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<sup>74</sup> Ellison, *Egalitarian Thought and Labour Politics*, pp. ix-x.

<sup>75</sup> Douglas Jay, *Socialism in the New Society* (London, 1962), p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> Warde, *Consensus and Beyond*, p. 49.

<sup>77</sup> Ellison, *Egalitarian Thought and Labour Politics*, p. 19.

people have the best chance of finding happiness for themselves'.<sup>78</sup> This was the promotion of positive freedom, specifically in relation to the welfare of the individual. Despite the understanding that a belief in liberty was hardly specific to socialism, it was argued by Jay in particular that all must have an equal right to freedom for society to be truly free, and that one 'cannot have freedom in any real sense without equality' (to be achieved by the measures set out in revisionist doctrine).<sup>79</sup> But although it was stressed frequently that social equality would be achieved without any restrictions placed upon human capacities or freedoms, the revisionists' emphasis on liberty did not always sit easily with the egalitarian ideal, especially when decisions had to be made – a problem which became more apparent once Labour was back in government from the mid-1960s onwards.

But this was not the only means by which freedom was understood. Another of its attributes was the positive consequences it had for democracy. Of all the revisionist thinkers, it is Evan Durbin whose evaluation of socialism was most heavily indebted to a conception of how a truly democratic polity should operate. In using the term 'democracy', he focused on three of its essential qualities: that it allowed for the ability of the people to choose a Government; that for liberty to exist there must be the right to choose, thereby necessitating freedom to oppose the Government of the day; and, lastly, that there must be 'an implicit undertaking between the Parties contending for power in the State not to persecute each other'.<sup>80</sup> For Durbin this was 'the most essential condition for the existence and maintenance of democracy', and it gave his political identity a nationalist tinge that was otherwise absent in the more universalist dialectics of later revisionists such as Crosland and Strachey.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, he saw the nation state as 'the most powerful social group', giving him – and others, like Crosland and Jay – a belief in the endurance and legitimacy of national democratic

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<sup>78</sup> Hugh Gaitskell, *Socialism and Nationalisation*, Fabian Tract (London, 1956), p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> Jay, *Socialism in the New Society*, p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> E.F.M. Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism* (London, 1938), pp. 237-41.

<sup>81</sup> Durbin, *Politics of Democratic Socialism*, pp. 240-1.

institutions, which the latter subsequently defended as ‘strikingly stable’ and ‘exceptionally tolerant of dissent’.<sup>82</sup> Understanding democracy through this prism had a consequent effect on Durbin’s belief in socialism; he viewed both as inextricably linked, and insisted that ‘to betray democracy is to betray socialism’.<sup>83</sup>

The main enemy of freedom in the twentieth-century, according to Durbin, was Marxism. He had a ‘deeply felt opposition to the Soviet regime’ for its crushing totalitarianism, a horror enhanced by the turbulent era in which his generation reached political maturity.<sup>84</sup> The 1950s cohort of revisionists, however, was no different: Crosland’s attacks on Communist ideology, for example, were viewed even by a sympathetic historian as ‘contain[ing] at times elements of a personal vendetta’.<sup>85</sup> The reasons for these bouts of strong feeling were essentially emotional and, indeed, ethical. Little wonder that it was Tawney who articulated his opposition to Marxism in the most direct and uncompromising fashion: it was, says his biographer Ross Terrill, the readiness of British Communists to ‘abandon persuasion for coercion when necessary’ that damned them in his eyes, by illustrating their essential hostility to freedom.<sup>86</sup> When Alan Warde asks why Crosland aimed so squarely at ‘ghostly Marxian economism’ despite its relative insignificance in British political life, the explanation lies in the abhorrence the latter felt not just for historical materialism but its repression of the individual by the state machine.<sup>87</sup>

The final core ethical quality of revisionism is *rationality*. At a basic level, to be rational is simply to apply one’s reason to the problems of life. Of course, to deploy reason in a political context is to enlist many qualities essential to the gradualist, evolutionary model of

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<sup>82</sup> E.F.M. Durbin, *What Have We to Defend? A Brief Critical Examination of the British Social Tradition* (London, 1942), p. 8; Crosland, *Future of Socialism*, p. 247.

<sup>83</sup> Durbin, *Politics of Democratic Socialism*, p. 271.

<sup>84</sup> Stephen Brooke, ‘Evan Durbin: Reassessing a Labour “Revisionist”’, *Twentieth-Century British History*, 7 (1996), p. 35.

<sup>85</sup> Haseler, *Gaitskellites*, p. 82.

<sup>86</sup> Ross Terrill, *R. H. Tawney and His Times: Socialism as Fellowship* (London, 1974), p. 274.

<sup>87</sup> Warde, *Consensus and Beyond*, p. 45.

political development. It demands empirical evaluation and a willingness to consider all potentially justifiable solutions and eventualities; freedom of thought to pursue matters objectively; a scepticism towards faith and emotion; and a strong dislike of ‘prejudice’ and traditional modes of conduct that ignore the need for change. Within revisionist circles this was broken down into two interrelated categories. First, the long-standing tradition of repudiating ‘systemised dogma’, not just for its refusal to appreciate the realities of the outside world, but because of the closed mindset it represented.<sup>88</sup> ‘No particular method can be deified’, declared the Socialist Union in 1952, while the philosopher and future Labour MP Bryan Magee maintained that ‘the sacrifice of human beings to principles is a great evil’.<sup>89</sup> Second, the obverse: an overriding determination, as Magee put it, ‘to subject [the] assumptions and structure [of theories] to critical examination [and] to view them carefully in the light of other theories’, a position enhanced in his case by close readings of the anti-historicist arguments made by the philosopher Karl Popper.<sup>90</sup> This approach enabled revisionists to argue that it was observable realities that mattered, and that socialism was only of consequence if it had practical effects based on factual evidence. It also, by definition, required a constant updating of one’s ideas, forever adapting to suit new circumstances that emerged once such evidence was revealed; this is why revisionism, as Radhika Desai suggested, ‘has no successor’.<sup>91</sup>

Reason was therefore also the wellspring for the revisionists’ pursuit of modernity, which more often than not appeared as the main outward manifestation of their philosophy. Without the conception of a ‘modern’ society to aim for there could be no basis for the steady evolution towards the social-democratic state: as the political theorist Jay Blumler explained

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<sup>88</sup> Haseler, *Gaitskellites*, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Socialist Union, *Socialism: A New Statement of Principles* (London, 1952), p. 23; Bryan Magee, *The New Radicalism* (London, 1962), p. 55.

<sup>90</sup> Magee, *New Radicalism*, pp. 15, 32.

<sup>91</sup> Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism*, p. 66.

in 1962, only a logical, ‘scientific’ veracity could strip socialist doctrine of its ‘outmoded, dogmatic and aggressive elements’.<sup>92</sup> Revisionists thus spoke repeatedly of ‘moving with the times’, of ‘keeping up to date’ and reforming that which was ‘outdated’, a perception which cohered easily with their yearnings for social rather than purely economic equality. The young revisionist MP John P. Mackintosh, for example, had a dislike of class prejudice that was fostered during his time at Oxford, which was subsequently to metamorphose into a lifelong appreciation for the ‘more egalitarian and idealistic atmosphere’ that was apparently to be found in the United States, where academics could rub shoulders with plumbers and joiners and ‘where the superior-class trick did not pay off’.<sup>93</sup> By extension, of course, to promote modernity was to reject the past, which was frequently regarded as irrational in nature: this applied as much to the nature of the Labour Party – and, in the words of one leading Labour right-winger, the ‘cloth-capped image’ it supposedly represented – as it did to British society more generally.<sup>94</sup>

As Martin Francis has noted, the pursuit of a modern and rational order was therefore a key aspect of the Labour Party’s approach, especially in the early post-war period, while Dean Blackburn claims that ‘common understandings of human reason’ affected the entire political order, leading both the main parties to apply themselves to the task of restructuring and improving British society.<sup>95</sup> The role of reason in politics had its critics, however, most notably the conservative philosopher Michael Oakeshott, who saw in this new consensus not rationality – which is merely the quality of being rational – but *rationalism*, a specific ideological sub-stratum which, according to Blackburn, regards reason ‘as the supreme

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<sup>92</sup> Jay Blumler, ‘Socratic Socialism’, *Socialist Commentary*, November 1962.

<sup>93</sup> John P. Mackintosh, ‘Forty Years On?’, *Political Quarterly*, 41:1 (1968), p. 49.

<sup>94</sup> George Brown, *In My Way: The Political Memoirs of Lord George-Brown* (London, 1971), p. 81.

<sup>95</sup> Martin Francis, ‘The Labour Party: Modernisation and the Politics of Restraint’, in Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters (eds), *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945–1964* (London, 1999), pp. 153-4; Dean Blackburn, ‘Reassessing Britain’s ‘Politics of Consensus’: The Politics of Reason, 1945-1979’, *British Politics*, 13:2 (2018), p. 196.

source of human knowledge'.<sup>96</sup> This left open the possibility that the supposedly 'non-ideological' dictates of reason could easily curdle into the kind of inflexible, meliorist belief system that the revisionists themselves disdained: to use Croslandite terminology, being 'modern' and 'rational' could act not just as ends but as a means in themselves, a self-perpetuating teleology of continually following 'change' towards what Ross Terrill called a 'fixed postideological destination'.<sup>97</sup> The New Left critic Peter Sedgwick, writing in 1969, condemned Labour's revisionist 'theoreticians' in just this way, assailing their 'sweeping rationalism' in pursuit of the 'utopian vision of a world controlled'.<sup>98</sup>

Although certain revisionists did not fully appreciate the dangers inherent in such a model, others clearly did. Magee, for example, held that feelings always find 'outlets', and that 'the objects of human activity are not determined by reason but by our physical and emotional needs'; rational thinking, he argued, can only supply the ends, but not necessarily provide the means, and it behoved policymakers to resist concrete assumptions.<sup>99</sup> Ultimately, it was Durbin who examined this dilemma to the greatest extent. Because of his interests in social psychology, and his own deep emotional identification with his countrymen and their history, he enquired into why group unity and loyalty were such 'powerful forces' in human life.<sup>100</sup> Concluding that 'no theory of human society or history based upon a doctrine of rational or conscious purpose can contain the whole truth', he urged politicians to 'judge every institution and system of thought by the emotions that are involved in it and justified by it'. Irrationality and feeling, he believed, could not simply be wished away; they were fundamental to all forms of political action.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (London, 1962); Blackburn, 'Reassessing Britain's 'Politics of Consensus'', p. 199.

<sup>97</sup> Terrill, *R.H. Tawney and His Times*, p. 271.

<sup>98</sup> Peter Sedgwick, 'Varieties of Socialist Thought', *Political Quarterly*, 40:4 (1969), p. 397.

<sup>99</sup> Magee, *New Radicalism*, pp. 18-9.

<sup>100</sup> Durbin, *What Have We to Defend?*, p. 5.

<sup>101</sup> Durbin, *Politics of Democratic Socialism*, pp. 70-2.

The interrelation of these three ethical principles led them to reinforce each other, and they were the grounds for the cohesion and appeal of a revisionist doctrine which otherwise may have struggled to be appreciated beyond the confines of a narrow intelligentsia. It is important to note, however, that the relationships between each ethical ideal were complex, often existing on several levels. In many instances, they could come into conflict, especially if one ethic was prioritised over any of the others. Nicholas Ellison has argued, for example, that by the 1950s many revisionists, such as Douglas Jay and Roy Jenkins, developed an increasingly ‘liberal’ bias that saw them pay more attention to questions of individual freedom – especially those concerning equality of opportunity within the free-market order – than was the case with Crosland, whose intellectual fecundity propagated a particular ‘brand of egalitarianism’ that left him adrift from the other two.<sup>102</sup> The Tawneyite Rita Hinden, for one, took offence to Jay’s rationalist approach, which she believed prioritised the importance of doctrine over the ethics of the movement; critiquing one of his books in the pages of *Socialist Commentary*, she described him as ‘dumb about the values which dominate our society and our thinking’, arguing that his vision ‘cannot satisfy thinking socialists’.<sup>103</sup> For all that revisionists, as Jeremy Nuttall suggests, believed in ‘synthesising and balancing desirable values and qualities of mind rather than choosing between them’, the reality was often much more confusing, with their personal, subjective preferences frequently coming to the fore when they were confronted with competing – rather than complementary – ethics.<sup>104</sup>

### **The ‘non-revisionist’ right: traditionalism and Labourism**

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<sup>102</sup> Ellison, *Egalitarian Thought and Labour Politics*, p. 73.

<sup>103</sup> Rita Hinden, ‘Socialism by Half’, *Socialist Commentary*, March 1962.

<sup>104</sup> Jeremy Nuttall, ‘Labour Revisionism and Qualities of Mind and Character, 1931-79’, *English Historical Review*, cxx: 487 (2005), p. 694.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s it was commonplace to view the Labour right as consisting of little more than the revisionist school, such was the latter's ideological dominance. But, more recently, efforts have been made to examine its internal composition, with the hope of explaining why such a previously solid unit fell apart once in power. Many commentators have now identified the existence of a separate tendency on the right which, although sharing the doctrinal assumptions of the revisionists, was culturally and often socially separate from it. Any attempts at a coherent definition of this tendency, however, have been fraught with difficulty. The feeling that the separation, such as it was, did not revolve around policy – or concerned any aspect of party philosophy at all – led many of the more disgruntled revisionists to jump in early with their own conclusions. John Mackintosh, writing in 1972, felt that the lack of doctrinal disputes meant that the divisions could best be understood as 'a mood or an approach to politics. It may be hard to pin down in policy terms, but it can be smelt'.<sup>105</sup> David Marquand, a parliamentary supporter of Roy Jenkins like Mackintosh, similarly referred to it as 'a mood, not an ideology... a smell in the air, not a text on paper'.<sup>106</sup> Any sense of distinctiveness was therefore assumed to be based primarily on instincts and conditionings rather than political thought.

This explanation has subsequently gained credence in academic quarters, together with an appreciation of the influence exerted by the trade unions on this alternative strain. Thus, James Jupp has characterised the essential difference within the right as lying between the 'machine-union Right' and the 'Fabian intellectual Right' – inferring that the former did not willingly explore ideas as the latter did, while further noting that both were as one on most major policy positions.<sup>107</sup> Leon Epstein similarly acknowledges that the moderates

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<sup>105</sup> John P. Mackintosh, 'Socialism or Social Democracy? The Choice for the Labour Party', *Political Quarterly*, 43:4 (1972), p. 472.

<sup>106</sup> David Marquand, 'Inquest on a Movement: Labour's Defeat and its Consequences', *Encounter*, July 1979.

<sup>107</sup> Jupp, 'The British Social Democrats', p. 254.

depended on a substantial group who, unlike the revisionists, ‘displayed much less well-defined ideological positions’ and were partially ‘represented by many non-Left trade unionists’ loyal to Gaitskell.<sup>108</sup> Jupp similarly saw right-wing trade unionists ‘like Bevin, Citrine, Williamson, Lawther and Carron’ as leaders of this tendency, while Marquand detected their hand in perpetuating divisions, noting sourly that the incivility of the ‘trade-union Establishment’ and its innate understanding of working-class prejudices led them to disregard the input of the ‘radical intelligentsia’ within the party.<sup>109</sup>

Another historian, Vincent McKee, has written of the non-revisionists as successors to the Morrisonian ‘consolidators’ of old, viewing them as a self-consciously loyal group that expanded in the 1970s to include some jaded ‘old style’ revisionists such as Crosland, and which acted as a fulcrum between the contemporary revisionists – led, in McKee’s view, by Roy Jenkins – and the rather more incendiary ‘populist’ flank on the hard-right of the party (see chapter five). McKee views the consolidators as non-ideological, distinguishing them from the revisionists chiefly by their tactics and personnel – the latter consisting not just of MPs but also councillors, constituency officers and trade union activists, many of whom were battling against the Left on local issues.<sup>110</sup> The consolidators, given their loyalist position, were therefore shocked by the supposed intellectual dogmatism and antagonism of the revisionists, and the trouble this caused for the party. McKee’s definition is nonetheless problematic. He not only expands the consolidator group to the point of near-incoherence – including both Callaghan, who arguably fits the profile well, and Douglas Jay, who does not – but in doing so ends up narrowly defining the revisionists on the basis of their apparent ‘Eurozeal’ and élitist inclinations. As Stephen Meredith points out, this essentially reduces

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<sup>108</sup> Leon Epstein, ‘Organisational Policy Making: British Labour Revisited’, The American Political Science Association annual meeting, 29 August – 2 September 1974.

<sup>109</sup> Jupp, ‘The British Social Democrats’, p. 254; Marquand, ‘Inquest on a Movement’.

<sup>110</sup> Vincent McKee, ‘Fragmentation on the Labour Right, 1975-87’, *Politics*, 11:1 (1991), pp. 25-6.

the revisionist wing to little more than a Jenkinsite rump.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, such a typology bears the weakness of a focus largely on the 1970s, when Jenkins's group were damned for their apparently patrician attitudes and disloyalty over EEC entry (see chapter two), thereby unintentionally suggesting that the rupture within the right was contingent on a particular place and time and not a continuation of something much more fundamental.

One factor that complicates discussion of the right's 'alternative' dimension is the existence of the 'centre' of the party. Many academics have found this element to also be somewhat elusive: Noel Thompson describes it as having a 'protean character which precludes the analytical and prescriptive coherence one associates with the old and new, lefts and rights', conceding that it is difficult to locate a distinctively 'centrist' political economy, with no intellectual figures (apart from, he suggests, John Strachey) hailing from within its boundaries.<sup>112</sup> This lack of ideological foundation suggest parallels with the non-revisionist right, and indeed it is common for Labour politicians to combine both concepts together by referring to the 'centre-right' when discussing those who did not have a distinctively revisionist profile. But the Labour centre cannot simply be used as a shorthand for the non-revisionist right, as the latter – despite interacting with it – is clearly not *of* it. As Mark Wickham-Jones states, the centre is 'amorphous' in nature and acquired an identity chiefly through its positioning on the party spectrum, being uncommitted to either the left or to the right and transferring allegiance in either direction from issue to issue.<sup>113</sup> This renders it distinct from the alternative right-wing grouping that is being defined here, for although that element shared certain characteristics and historical features with other wings of the party, its sense of loyalty was to the right-wing leadership, with whom it acquiesced on factional issues

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<sup>111</sup> Stephen Meredith, 'Labours Old and New: Ideological, Political and Organisational Fragmentation on the Parliamentary Right of the British Labour Party 1970-79' (unpublished PhD thesis, 2004), pp. 69-70

<sup>112</sup> Noel Thompson, 'The Centre', in Raymond Plant, Matt Beech and Kevin Hickson (eds), *The Struggle for Labour's Soul* (London, 2004), p. 47.

<sup>113</sup> Mark Wickham-Jones, *Economic Strategy and the Labour Party: Politics and Policy Making, 1970-83* (London, 1996), p. 31.

and matters of policy; it did not have an equal connection to both the right and the left as the centre did.

There is, in addition, another explanation which can be used to help understand the alternative, nebulous form of political consciousness that existed on the right. This universal, almost holistic concept, commonly referred to as ‘Labourism’, was coined by the coterie of young Marxists who founded the *New Left Review* in 1960, although the word itself has a much older vintage and does not possess any agreed definition.<sup>114</sup> Although it rarely refers to the Labour right in particular – indeed, its explicit purpose was to explain what its creators saw as the historical trajectory of the party as a whole – the Labourist thesis accommodates enough of the characteristics others have attributed to the non-revisionist tendency to be valid as an exploratory tool.

The root contention of the Labourist idea is that the Labour movement has always been conditioned by the atypical and stunted nature of social development in Britain. Rejecting the revolutionary stance adopted by the working classes in continental Europe, the Labour Party’s founders – most of whom came from the world of trade unionism – reflected the ‘mindless complacency of British bourgeois society’ in their empirical, piecemeal attitude to social reform and outright rejection of Marxist theory.<sup>115</sup> Defiantly hostile to intellectuals and their ideas, British socialist pioneers instead fashioned a distinctively ‘Labourist’ stance – a ‘vapid substitute for a genuine socialist doctrine’ – which aimed towards working class representation in parliament and, through that, the amelioration of some of the worst material deficiencies experienced by members of that class.<sup>116</sup> This had the consequence of tying the urban proletariat to the party, which lacked the ‘intellectual tools and the political confidence to engage in a critical analysis of capitalist society’, engaging in ‘class collaboration’ instead

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<sup>114</sup> See Foote, *The Labour Party’s Political Thought*, pp. 7-11.

<sup>115</sup> Tom Nairn, ‘The Nature of the Labour Party – 1’, *New Left Review*, 27 (1964), pp. 38-9.

<sup>116</sup> Eric Shaw, ‘Labourism’, in Raymond Plant, Matt Beech and Kevin Hickson (eds), *The Struggle for Labour’s Soul* (London, 2004), p. 188.

of acquiring the consciousness to fulfil their revolutionary potential.<sup>117</sup> The *rapprochement* of labour with capital thus explains the adherence of the party to the traditions of parliamentary democracy, the unions' preference for conciliation and arbitration in industrial disputes, and – most importantly – the formulation of a moderate, reformist strategy that made ‘the creation of a socialist society... an aim distant to the point of invisibility’.<sup>118</sup>

As Steven Fielding notes, Labourism in this sense ‘is no innocent, objective concept: it was a weapon initially fashioned by critics wishing to transcend or transform the Party’.<sup>119</sup> Eric Shaw has similarly observed that the explanation given by the New Left theorists is ‘contingent upon the validity of key Marxist theorems’.<sup>120</sup> But Terry Irving has pointed out that Labourism also has a ‘common-sense, empiricist’ dimension, crediting the work of the American labour historian John R. Commons for using the term to describe a pragmatic, ‘non-socialist’ philosophy amongst working men that reflected their perception of the environment around them.<sup>121</sup> This rather more objective understanding has in turn been deployed by Geoffrey Foote to argue that, as the Labour Party was created by the unions to fight on their behalf in parliament, the key concern of ‘trade union politics’ (i.e., Labourism) within both wings of the movement was to pragmatically enhance workers’ living standards within the confines of the present capitalist system; ergo, this is what makes the party a ‘labour’ party and gives it its *raison d’être*. Unlike Commons, however, he warns that to refer to Labourism as an ideology is to dignify it with a rigour that it does not possess: ‘Higher wages, shorter hours and better working conditions do not lend themselves to a general philosophy of society.’ Its value lies in revealing a set of assumptions from within the Labour

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<sup>117</sup> Shaw, ‘Labourism’, p. 188; John Saville, ‘The Ideology of Labourism’, in Robert Benewick, R.N. Berki, and Bhikhu Parekh (eds), *Knowledge and Belief in Politics: The Problem of Political Ideology* (London, 1973), p. 215.

<sup>118</sup> Saville, ‘The Ideology of Labourism’, pp. 215-6; Ralph Miliband, ‘The Sickness of Labourism’, *New Left Review*, 1 (1960), p. 5.

<sup>119</sup> Steven Fielding, ‘“Labourism” and Locating the British Labour Party within the European Left’, in *Working Papers in Contemporary History and Politics*, no. 11 (Salford, 1996), p. 1.

<sup>120</sup> Shaw, ‘Labourism’, p. 189.

<sup>121</sup> Terry Irving, ‘Labourism – A Political Genealogy’, *Labour History*, 66 (1994), pp. 1-3.

movement ‘which were to prove the bedrock onto which other political theories were to be grafted.’<sup>122</sup>

One historian who produced a very similar schema to that used by Foote, contributing to an enriched and deeper understanding of the Labour Party’s ideology as a result, was H. M. Drucker. His interpretation of Labourism was based on the principle that the British working class, as a social interest which had successfully fought its way to some kind of an established position, was never going to reject its collective memory of heroic past struggles in favour of pursuing modernity. The history of the movement was in fact a necessary component of the Labour Party’s ideology, informing its values and culture and ensuring that it ‘could not be *simpliciter* a party of the future’.<sup>123</sup> The unions were essential to this aspect of the Labourist worldview, as their habits and traditions were transferred to the party upon its foundation and left an indelible mark on its behaviour.<sup>124</sup> Drucker presented Labour’s appropriation of the past and its union links as two key elements of what he called ‘conservative socialism’, noting that modernising revisionists who stood on the outside could find such a formula both hostile to notions of progress and overly committed to irrational myths and symbols.<sup>125</sup> The ‘grafting’ of this historicist ethos onto the Labourist consciousness was later fashioned by David Marquand into a powerful critique of the party, which he used to substantiate his existing ideas about its innate lack of intellectual curiosity and fetishisation of working-class mores and attitudes (see above, and chapter four). It is Marquand who perhaps best encapsulated the pejorative associations with which his section of the revisionist right came to understand Labourism, describing it in his book *The Progressive Dilemma* as the means by which the party became an ‘instrument of the labour

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<sup>122</sup> Foote, *Labour Party’s Political Thought*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>123</sup> Henry Drucker, ‘Conservative Socialism: Antihistorical Socialism in the British Labour Party’, *International Political Science Review*, 1:3 (1980), pp. 331, 339.

<sup>124</sup> H.M. Drucker, ‘The Influence of Trade Unions on the Leadership of the Labour Party’, in Ben Pimlott and Chris Cook (eds), *Trade Unions in British Politics* (London, 1982), pp. 260-1.

<sup>125</sup> Drucker, ‘Conservative Socialism’, pp. 339-41.

interest rather than... the vehicle for any ideology.<sup>126</sup> For him, introducing ideas to the party mainstream was a fruitless endeavour, as the movement's primal instincts superseded them time and again.

Drucker and Marquand's separate usages of Labourism and 'ethos' can be deployed as conceptual frameworks for understanding the non-revisionist right – or what both Tudor Jones and Dianne Hayter have, perhaps more appropriately, called the traditional or 'traditionalist' right.<sup>127</sup> As with the New Left's idea of Labourism, such analyses are inevitably conditioned – especially in Marquand's case – by the biases of their authors. But even if one does not agree with the central premises of this form of Labourism, it is still possible to take two aspects of it – the strong identification with working class traditions, and the importance of the unions in shaping the party's own outlook – and use them to suggest alternative interpretations of the revisionists' ethical principles, as understood by this 'traditionalist' or 'non-revisionist' mindset.

One can see firstly that, on the question of *freedom*, while there was no dissension within the right concerning the legitimacy of parliamentary democracy, the traditional-Labourist worldview was often instinctively antagonistic towards any attempts by governments – including Labour ones – to circumscribe the liberties of trade unions, most notably the right to bargain freely with employers; these were collective freedoms, not individual ones, and it sometimes held that for a group to be truly free to act as it wishes then personal rights and liberties had to be curtailed. When it came to *equality*, although there was no serious objection to the goals of reducing class differences and ending the archaic array of privileges and snobberies that went with them, the traditionalist impetus was on maintaining working-class consciousness in the face of these challenges, rather than introducing a

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<sup>126</sup> David Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1999), p. 17.

<sup>127</sup> Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party*, p. 59; Dianne Hayter, *Fightback! Labour's Traditional Right in the 1970s and 1980s* (Manchester, 2005).

classless, socially-mobile society. Their often explicitly proletarian spirit clearly offended ‘middle-class intellectuals’ such as Marquand and Roy Jenkins, but others on the right were able to tap into the populist energies it created, either through opportunism or genuine identification, so that by the 1970s working-class political identity was most clearly articulated in the form of a general ‘anti-élitist’ or populist sentiment. As for the revisionists’ emphasis on *rationality*, whereas there was no fundamental objection to the idea that the party had to take into account empirical observation and resist ‘dogma’ – which fitted in with non-intellectual notions of common-sense – this still collided with the ‘irrational’ impulses that could be unleashed from the older, ‘atavistic’ instincts of the traditionalist-Labourist *Weltanschauung*, which in turn antagonised the modernist and progressive desires of the revisionists.

The most apposite example of how revisionism and traditionalism could collide on issues concerning fundamental values came in 1959, when Hugh Gaitskell had attempted to revise clause four of the party’s constitution, the aim of which was to commit the party to socialism through the principle of common ownership. On the platform at the party conference that year, Gaitskell insisted that the constitution needed to be ‘brought up to date’, imploring the audience to ‘remember that we are a Party of the future, not of the past; that we must appeal to the young as well as the old’.<sup>128</sup> The response from the audience was not favourable. Conference delegates blasted their leader for his destructive attitude towards a cherished aspect of Labour’s heritage: Richard Jobson cites one member who declared that ‘This is almost as sacrilegious to me as to say... we ought to drop the singing of the *Red Flag*’.<sup>129</sup> This sentiment was not confined to the fringes, for the ‘traditionalist critics’, as

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<sup>128</sup> Labour Party, *Report of the 58th Annual Conference (LPACR)*, 1959, p. 107.

<sup>129</sup> Richard Jobson, ‘“Waving the Banners of a Bygone Age”, Nostalgia and Labour’s Clause IV Controversy, 1959–60’, *Contemporary British History*, 27:2 (2013), p. 128.

Tudor Jones calls them, were numerous and ‘to be found not just on the left of the party’.<sup>130</sup> Even some of Gaitskell’s closest allies were incredulous: Jim Griffiths, a proletarian right-winger, reminded him that Clause Four was ‘an article of faith to me and to my generation’.<sup>131</sup> What Gaitskell had wilfully ignored was the power of ethos in the party, ‘the immense symbolic value which a continuous tradition of opposition to capitalism held for Labour’ which was felt ‘most strongly on the left... [but] pervaded the Labour movement as a whole’.<sup>132</sup> The reason for this error of judgement, as Kenneth Morgan notes, was that he overvalued rationality and underestimated the importance of the past, getting the ‘psychology of the party wholly wrong’. ‘The proposal to abolish Clause Four’, he notes, ‘was a victory for abstract logic over common sense.’<sup>133</sup>

But if these were the chief attributes of the traditionalist, non-revisionist right, does it naturally follow that revisionists should be considered as separate from them – or *vice-versa*? Scholars have been aware of such a question, focusing particularly on the career of Anthony Crosland, who by the 1970s exhibited an increasing irritation with some of his revisionist comrades’ more provocative behaviour. Crosland’s overt sympathies for the cultural habits of the working class, which some mistook for an affectation, existed in uneasy tension with his dislike of the ‘traditional’ Labourist mindset for its lack of ‘radical appeal’ and ‘conservative and middle aged’ profile, which occasionally led to a lack of clarity about what he thought Labour’s attitude to class structures should be.<sup>134</sup> Alan Warde notes that Crosland, in a document written in 1963, claimed to be ‘on both sides of the working class-community divide’: from advocating that it was imperative that Labour make ‘a genuinely national and

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<sup>130</sup> Tudor Jones, ‘‘Taking Genesis out of the Bible’’: Hugh Gaitskell, Clause IV and Labour’s Socialist Myth’, *Contemporary British History*, 11:2 (1997), p. 4.

<sup>131</sup> James Griffiths, *Pages from Memory* (London, 1969), p. 135.

<sup>132</sup> Jones, ‘Taking Genesis out of the Bible’, p. 18.

<sup>133</sup> Kenneth Morgan, *Labour People: Leaders and Lieutenants, Hardie to Kinnock* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 221, 228.

<sup>134</sup> C.A.R. Crosland, *The Conservative Enemy* (London, 1962), p. 12.

genuinely classless appeal', just a paragraph later he was stressing that it must continue to 'draw the bulk of its support from the Trade Unions and the organized working class'.<sup>135</sup> These ambiguities could never be properly resolved, not only for Crosland but for a considerable number of right-wingers. The intertwining of revisionism with broader ethical visions endowed almost all party members, even bourgeois ones, with a specific moral commitment to the welfare of the working class, and until the debate over EEC entry most right-wingers prided themselves on their loyalty to the movement and its established institutional links with the unions – it was the left who were widely seen as 'disloyal'.<sup>136</sup> Some revisionist MPs even admitted to feeling an identification for Labour which transcended any rational calculation: Roy Hattersley once described himself as a supporter 'in the same way that I was a Hattersley – naturally, inevitably'.<sup>137</sup>

Just as significantly, the notion that the non-revisionist identity was somehow indifferent to 'ideas' should also come under scrutiny, given the ethical dimension of ideology. For all the antipathy towards intellectuals that existed, there was never a suggestion from any part of the movement that social-democratic politics should exist without some kind of ideological content. Steven Fielding argues that the New Left's portrayal of Labourism in the party as materialistic and 'mindless' was a myth, pointing out that its ethical vision had a genuine meaning in this sphere, and was instrumental in introducing working-class members to an elaboration both of socialist values and the transformed society that would result from them.<sup>138</sup> George Brown, who came to the movement in this way, asserted that he was always open to new thinking provided they lent themselves to practical action. Throughout his autobiography Brown expresses particular admiration for Ernest Bevin, who was more than

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<sup>135</sup> Warde, *Consensus and Beyond*, pp. 63-4.

<sup>136</sup> Stephen Haseler, *The Tragedy of Labour* (Oxford, 1980), p. 119.

<sup>137</sup> Roy Hattersley, *A Yorkshire Boyhood* (London, 1983), p. 174.

<sup>138</sup> Steven Fielding, 'Labourism in the 1940s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 3:2 (1992), pp. 145-

able to grasp the nature of ideas through his involvement with and knowledge of existing political problems, often coming up with innovative solutions when given the opportunity – as he did during the Mond-Turner talks on industrial modernisation in 1928, for example, or in his advocacy of Keynesian monetary strategies long before they were mainstream.<sup>139</sup>

‘[Bevin] was essentially a practical idealist’, argued Brown, who ‘made up his mind about issues on their merits as he saw them, but always in accordance with his principles’.<sup>140</sup>

Such an applied form of reasoning is ultimately little different to that practised by the revisionists themselves – pointedly undogmatic, policy-focused, and attuned to changing circumstances on the ground. It also suggests that the apprehensions some right-wingers had for ‘intellectuals’ rested on other issues, such as the perceived class loyalties of the latter and the social complexes that resulted, rather than an unwillingness to engage with political thought *per se*. This raises the question as to how much one should take the ‘intellectual’ qualities of the revisionists at face value when examining the fragmentation of the Labour right. Perhaps it makes more sense to consider how their ideas were used and received; whether they were presented as being in keeping with received revisionist wisdom, or went against or *beyond* them: in particular, the importance of ethics as a component of ideology in understanding how revisionism was understood can be used to arrive at explanations for why the traditionalist mentality differed. Furthermore, although one can speak of revisionist and traditionalist categories, it is clearly far less appropriate to shoehorn individuals into them. Even Mackintosh recognised that his schematic depiction of both sides was a caricature, imposing ‘a coherence which does not fully exist’.<sup>141</sup> ‘Such presentations’, as Stephen Meredith suggests, ‘often produce rigid, uniform accounts of the... Labour right, and often

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<sup>139</sup> Alan Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin: vol. 1, 1881-1940* (London, 1960), pp. 446-7; David Howell, *MacDonald's Party: Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 188-9.

<sup>140</sup> Brown, *In My Way*, p. 58.

<sup>141</sup> Mackintosh, ‘Socialism or Social Democracy?’, p. 474.

underplay the complexities and divisions within Labour's so-called 'governing élite' and 'dominant coalition' and their implications for intra-party politics.'<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Meredith, 'Labours Old and New', p. 75.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The European dilemma

#### Introduction

The first major issue to threaten the unity of the Labour right was the question of whether or not Britain should join the Common Market, or the European Economic Community (EEC) as it was formally known. By the 1970s, arguments over entry had raged within the party for well over a decade, consuming the energies of many people on both sides of the debate.

Those commentators seeking to make generalisations about this fissure have often indulged in what one historian has described as the ‘hoary imagery’ of ‘right’ versus ‘left’ factionalism.<sup>143</sup> But, as Brian Brivati notes, from the beginning ‘[the] place of the European conflict in the internal politics of the Labour Party was not a straightforward one. It did not fit into the Left-Right divide’.<sup>144</sup> Although the left became virtually unanimous in its hostility to Europe, the right was polarised between the pro- and anti-EEC forces. The man who was perhaps responsible for this more than any other was Hugh Gaitskell, the party’s leader at the time the Treaty of Rome was signed. Whereas the majority of right-wingers during his days as leader were pro-Market – primarily out an idealistic commitment to internationalism – Gaitskell came out in opposition to joining the EEC at the first time of asking, in 1962. His decision created a rift which, a decade later, had still not healed.

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<sup>143</sup> Warde, *Consensus and Beyond*, p. 3.

<sup>144</sup> Brian Brivati, ‘Hugh Gaitskell and the EEC’, *Socialist History*, 4 (1994), p. 18.

One factor which contributed to this breach was the fact that, whereas most domestic matters allowed the revisionists to draw on a wealth of literature in support of their position, the European issue did not conform easily to any existing social-democratic doctrine. Many leading revisionist intellectuals – including those in favour of continental unity – had until then paid scant interest in matters outside of Whitehall; Stephen Howe remarks that even *The Future of Socialism* was ‘notable for [its] lack of attention to international relations’ (indeed, in its 529 pages there are barely any references to Europe at all).<sup>145</sup> As such, there was no orthodox prescription or method that could be held aloft as a ‘reasonable’ position for all revisionists to take. Thus, although a number believed that Britain would benefit from EEC membership, they did so primarily on the basis of their personal ideals and underlying emotional commitment. The same was true of their anti-Market revisionist opponents, even though both camps did engage in plenty of *post-hoc* rationalisation to support their views. As for the more ‘traditionalist’ element of the right-wing bloc, they largely supported Gaitskell in his defiant stand, but by the time 1971 came around a number of identifiably working-class MPs were in favour of entry, leading to no clear distinction on either side of the argument between revisionists and non-revisionists.

This chapter starts by following Gaitskell’s development from cautious sceptic to outright opponent of Market entry, noting in particular two of the revisionist ethics that influenced his change of stance – his commitment to reason, which he believed was absent from the pro-Market arguments; and his egalitarian beliefs, which left him aggrieved by what he saw as condescension from those in the upper echelons of society who advocated EEC membership. After a brief description of the pro- and anti-Market forces in the early 1970s, the following two sections examine how divisions over these ethics conditioned the

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<sup>145</sup> Stephen Howe, ‘Labour and International Affairs’, in Duncan Tanner, Nick Tiratsoo and Pat Thane (eds), *Labour’s First Century* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 123.

arguments that occurred within the Labour right during the third attempt at entry in 1971, with clashes taking place over the ‘visionary’ stance held by the ‘pros’ and their refusal to support a confirmatory referendum. The final section narrates what happened afterwards, in the period up to and including the 1975 referendum, focusing in particular on the gradual alienation of both the ‘Jenkinsite’ Marketeers and a smaller group of anti-EEC right-wingers from the main body of the party.

### **Gaitskell’s European legacy and the rush towards entry**

The issue of European integration was one that had long commanded the fascination of many in the Labour Party. But if the early enthusiasts for a ‘United States of Europe’ belonged largely to a utopian element of the left, by the 1960s most supporters clearly hailed from the right. Lynton Robins notes that only one of the 25 MPs involved in signing a parliamentary motion supporting Market entry in 1960 was a left-winger, while Stephen Haseler has estimated that approximately three-quarters of ‘those MPs who could be classified as revisionists’ were in favour.<sup>146</sup> Alongside veterans of the European cause, such as John Hynd and Arthur Bottomley, stood a caucus of younger Gaitskellites, many of whom grew up in the shadow of war and had developed a strong strain of liberal internationalism while studying at university (usually Oxford). Roy Jenkins, one of their standard-bearers, even resigned from the shadow front-bench’s economic team in 1960 over the doubts expressed by leading Shadow Cabinet members (including Harold Wilson) on the merits of joining ‘the Six’.<sup>147</sup> Hugh Gaitskell himself, however, was in the substantial minority of revisionists who rejected

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<sup>146</sup> Lynton Robins, *The Reluctant Party: Labour and the EEC, 1961-1975* (Ormskirk, 1979), p. 4.

<sup>147</sup> *Guardian*, 27 July 1960.

these pro-European sentiments, and when Harold Macmillan's Government applied to join the EEC it was he who led his party into a full-throated opposition, a decision that became one of the defining moments of his leadership.

Gaitskell's opposition had not been immediately apparent to most observers, as throughout 1962 he expressed no firm opinion on the matter, emphasising the need to keep options open and commenting on the even balance of the economic arguments. His attitude, claims Philip Williams, was largely one of studied indifference: he was irritated by those who thought the Community a 'great issue of principle' one way or the other, arguing that from a global perspective it was little more than 'parochial'.<sup>148</sup> This has prompted Brian Brivati to claim that Gaitskell was 'never in principle opposed to Britain's joining', only questioning the application terms in order to keep the party unified. His reasoning was not dogmatic, Brivati argues, and only developed in response to how events unfolded; there is no reason to presume, had circumstances been different, that he would have opposed entry.<sup>149</sup> Brivati's hypothesis conjures up an image of the flexible, realist leader, wedded to an empirical mode of thought, and it reflects how the revisionists as a whole saw themselves. Gaitskell himself clearly believed that he was taking a 'rational' viewpoint on the issue, as was demonstrated in April 1962 during his ill-fated meeting with one of the godfathers of the European project, Jean Monnet. Speaking about the positive effect membership would have for Britain, Monnet finished by imploring Gaitskell to 'have faith' – to which the latter famously retorted (with what Kenneth Morgan called a 'pernickety empiricism'): 'I don't believe in faith. I believe in reason: and there is little reason in anything you have been saying tonight.'<sup>150</sup>

However, while this comment provides an illuminating glimpse into Gaitskell's habit of mind, it should not be taken at face value when explaining his shift towards an explicitly

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<sup>148</sup> Philip Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell* (London, 1979), p. 702.

<sup>149</sup> Brivati, 'Gaitskell and the EEC', pp. 16-21.

<sup>150</sup> Kenneth Morgan, 'Hugh Gaitskell and International Affairs', *Contemporary Record*, 7:2 (1993), p. 319; Douglas Jay, *Change and Fortune: A Political Record* (London, 1980), p. 282.

anti-EEC position, for it risks detracting from the underlying prejudices and loyalties that conditioned his attitude towards the prospect of further integration. Although no doubt sincere in trying to remain neutral his instinctive antipathy to the project frequently surfaced, as illustrated by the five conditions for joining that he issued to the party faithful, which (it was clear) would have made membership exceedingly difficult to achieve.<sup>151</sup> The root cause of this paradox lies in Gaitskell's complex political psychology: for all that he lionised reason, when it came to causes dear to him he often found it difficult to separate a rational understanding from his underlying emotions, leading him to 'in a paradoxical way become too emotionally committed to an over-rational position' – or, indeed, one that he *thought* was 'rational'.<sup>152</sup>

It is from this perspective that one should appraise the major bombshell that occurred later that year: Gaitskell's speech at the 1962 party conference in Brighton, where he came out robustly against entry. Having remained circumspect prior to conference, he took to the platform to rouse his audience into opposition, shocking his pro-Market supporters by describing the threat to British sovereignty as he saw it:

What does federation mean? It means that powers are taken from national governments and handed over to federal governments and to federal parliaments. It means – I repeat it – that if we go into this we are no more than a state (as it were) in the United States of Europe, such as Texas and California... We must be clear about this: it does mean the end of Britain as an independent state.

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<sup>151</sup> Nora Beloff, *The General Says No* (London, 1963), p. 135; Ivor Richard *et al*, *Europe or the Open Sea* (London, 1971), pp. 74-5.

<sup>152</sup> Jenkins, 'Gaitskell and His Life', p. 21.

It would be, he claimed, the end of a ‘thousand years of history’.<sup>153</sup> The interplay between rationality and irrationality was on full display in this section of the speech. On the one hand, Gaitskell understood that the Common Market was more than just a free trade bloc, but a supranational institution with its own claims to sovereignty. Democratic freedoms were precious, and for Britain to enter into a relationship that involved giving them away to a foreign entity was, in his words, ‘a decision that needs a little care and thought!’ – an appeal to careful, reasoned argument rather than kneejerk posturing. On the other, his strong sense of patriotism appeared far removed from the caricature of the cerebral, technocratic revisionist, and his emotive appeals to nationhood disregarded the lengthy process of careful ratiocination that had characterised his attitudes beforehand.

But rationality (and its obverse) was not the only feature of Gaitskell’s speech that touched upon revisionist ethics. For pulsing throughout was a hostility to the ‘establishment’ that he blamed for attempting to bully the British public into accepting entry as a *fait accompli*, leading to this impassioned slice of populist rhetoric towards the end of his speech:

We are now being told the British people are not capable of judging on this issue – the Government knows best; the top people are the only people who can understand it; it is difficult for the rest... Of course, they extend the argument now. ‘We must go in,’ they say, ‘because the people who really understand it, the top people, all want it.’... But what an odious piece of hypocritical, supercilious, arrogant rubbish this is!<sup>154</sup>

Throwing invective against the ‘top people’ may seem itself paradoxical, given Gaitskell’s own background as a Wykehamist and former Whitehall civil servant, but it sprang from a

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<sup>153</sup> Labour Party, *Report of the 61st Annual Conference (LPACR)*, 1962, pp. 155-8, 159.

<sup>154</sup> *LPACR*, 1962, p. 164.

genuine dislike of the snobbery and condescension that he associated with the bourgeois mentality. It also reflected a shrewd understanding of his audience – and indeed his speech was given an overwhelmingly positive reception, among a predominantly working-class party membership that was forever eager to think the worst of the ‘élite’.

Having shed the ambiguity detected by Brivati, Gaitskell thus emerged as a passionate anti-Marketeer. There should be little doubt as to his sincerity: David Marquand contends that ‘when he evoked ‘a thousand years of history’, he meant what he said; it was because they could see that he meant what he said that his audience responded as they did.’<sup>155</sup> More importantly, however, by appealing to grassroots opinion Gaitskell was able to rally the majority of the party behind him, forging ‘a genuine sentiment of unity and purpose’.<sup>156</sup> To his supporters, he had – in Douglas Jay’s words – presided over an ‘intellectual massacre’, which inspired ‘conviction’ as well as ‘emotion’ throughout the audience.<sup>157</sup> His beleaguered opponents, meanwhile, saw only an irrational position contrary to revisionism’s own ideals, full of narrow prejudices and overwrought sentiment; many were so alienated by the speech that they chose to remain sitting down once it was over, rather than applaud it.<sup>158</sup> The key problem of the European debate, therefore, was that it presented the revisionists with a clash of competing *ethics*. The conclusions that they came to in later years were to leave a lasting impression.

Upon Gaitskell’s death in January 1963 a leadership election took place. Harold Wilson, who had been regarded as a centre-left Bevanite in the 1950s, defeated two centre-right candidates, James Callaghan and George Brown, for the role. Having long been sceptical of the Community’s merits, Wilson sharply changed tack following a catalogue of damaging economic episodes early in his premiership, most notably the sterling crisis of June

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<sup>155</sup> Marquand, *Progressive Dilemma*, p. 130.

<sup>156</sup> Tom Nairn, ‘The Left Against Europe?’, *New Left Review*, 75 (1972), p. 39.

<sup>157</sup> Jay, *Change and Fortune*, p. 286.

<sup>158</sup> William Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals* (London, 2000), p. 70.

1966. His Government, argues Helen Parr, quickly understood that the prospect of privileged access to new markets on the continent could provide a boon for exports and help secure a viable long-term future for the British economy. There were diplomatic incentives too: from 1965 it was apparent that if the Government was to ‘bolster Britain’s power in the world’ then it would have to adapt to a Europe that was increasingly dominated by the French.<sup>159</sup> ‘Going it alone’ suddenly looked like a riskier alternative to pooling resources with one’s neighbours. Soon, the party which had enthusiastically applauded Gaitskell’s defiance in 1962 was willing to take the plunge towards entry, with what R. J. Lieber terms a mixture of ‘conviction, opportunism and circumstance combined’.<sup>160</sup> It was specifically in this context that the second application for entry was lodged in May 1967.

The opposing perspectives of the committed pro- and anti-Marketeers by this stage can be gauged if one examines the arguments of the two principal right-wing proselytisers to be found on either side of the divide. Although erratic and hypersensitive, George Brown’s talent in government lay in his unflagging attempts to cultivate the ‘ongoing British capacity for international leadership’.<sup>161</sup> Appointed Foreign Secretary in 1966, Brown used his role to project a stance that Parr describes as ‘extremely favourable to European opinion in both tone and substance’.<sup>162</sup> In a speech to the Western European Union the following year he described the second application as a ‘decisive moment in our history’, envisioning a Community which aimed ‘at something far more than material prosperity... a greater political purpose for Western Europe.’ Britain was to be a central feature of this new order, bringing a ‘powerful influence’ to bear by making Europe a leader in the wider ‘Western Alliance’.

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<sup>159</sup> Helen Parr, ‘A Question of Leadership: July 1966 and Harold Wilson’s European Decision’, *Contemporary British History*, 19:4 (2005), p. 440.

<sup>160</sup> R. J. Lieber, *British Politics and European Unity: Parties, Elites and Pressure Groups* (London, 1970), p. 252.

<sup>161</sup> C. M. M. Cotton, ‘Labour, European Integration and the European Mind, 1960-75’, in Billy Frank *et al* (eds), *The British Labour Movement and Imperialism* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2010), p. 160.

<sup>162</sup> Helen Parr, *Britain’s Policy towards the European Community: Harold Wilson and Britain’s World Role, 1964-1967* (London, 2006), p. 143.

‘Unless Europe is united and strengthened’, he warned, ‘she will not be able to meet the challenge of the world today... Europe will drift further and further into the margin of events.’<sup>163</sup> Brown’s fervent hope was that British leadership in Europe would give the entire continent a *raison d’être* that it had previously lacked, and although he spoke of ‘continuing progress towards economic union’ he believed the economic case for entry was of less importance – indeed, in a later speech he conceded that any such benefits would not be ‘more than marginal for the British people’.<sup>164</sup>

In contrast, it was the economics behind closer integration that animated the chief anti-Market revisionist, Douglas Jay – a man whose understanding of revisionism depended on a strong attachment to factual evidence. Since being appointed to the Board of Trade in 1964, Jay had spent a great deal of his time examining the disadvantages of entry. Principal among these was the nullification of Britain’s membership of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) as a result of entering the Community’s common external tariff, and the replacement of the Commonwealth as a primary market for British exports. ‘Economically, we are asked to introduce a system of tariff preferences against our friends who happen to produce efficiently and cheaply most of the goods we need most’, he wrote, ‘and in favour of foreign countries who produce almost none of them.’<sup>165</sup> Interviewed by the journalist Alastair Hetherington in February 1967, Jay reserved his most severe criticism for the impact on food prices caused by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).<sup>166</sup> Viewing the CAP as a protectionist cartel designed to protect the interests of French agriculture, Jay regarded free trade as a *sine qua non* for Britain: as well as endowing the nation with a great advantage in

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<sup>163</sup> George Brown, ‘British Application to Join European Communities’, statement to the Council of the Western European Union, 4 July 1967.

<sup>164</sup> Brown, ‘British Application’; Weston Library, University of Oxford (WES): Papers of George Alfred Brown, MS.Eng.c.5095 – Speech by George Brown on ‘Britain in Europe’, 6 March 1969.

<sup>165</sup> Douglas Jay and Roy Jenkins, *The Common Market Debate*, Fabian Tract 341 (London, 1962), p. 3.

<sup>166</sup> British Library of Political and Economic Science (BLPES): Alastair Hetherington papers, 13/23 – ‘Points for a meeting with Mr Douglas Jay’, 14 February 1967.

the global marketplace, it also underpinned the liberal cheap food policies that had prevailed since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, which he regarded as one of the great liberties enjoyed by the British people.

By the time Jay made these comments he was a Cabinet minister, and although he observed necessary pieties by suggesting to Hetherington that suitable entry terms could be found if ‘we took our time’, such begrudging assent did not convince Wilson, who banished him from the Cabinet later in the year.<sup>167</sup> His fate was an indication of how the tide had turned against the anti-Marketees. Part of the problem was that Brown’s stirring, emotionally-charged pleas to place Britain at ‘the heart of Europe’, and his emphasis on diplomacy and foreign relations, were of far greater attraction to those aware of the problems facing the nation and the uncertainty of her future role. Jay’s arguments came across as antique in comparison, and for many their essentially ‘old hat’ nature merely served to reinforce Richard Crossman’s judgement that his hostility to the Community had led him to become ‘reactionary and narrow’ and unable to ‘assimilate new ideas’.<sup>168</sup>

Nonetheless, despite the united efforts of the Government, the ‘Second Try’ was a dead letter following yet another veto by the French in November 1967. Both parties remained committed to European entry, however, and after President De Gaulle’s resignation two years later there was renewed impetus towards yet another attempt. Within Labour, the flames of pro-Market activism were now being fanned by the Labour Committee for Europe (LCE), a ginger group established in January 1962 as the Labour Common Market Committee. Roy Jenkins was its first chairman, with John Strachey and Austen Albu among its 21 founder MPs (together with five peers and 15 ‘others’).<sup>169</sup> Within the space of a year

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<sup>167</sup> BLPES, Hetherington, 13/23 – ‘Meeting with Mr Douglas Jay’.

<sup>168</sup> Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister: Volume Two, 1966-68* (London, 1976), p. 111.

<sup>169</sup> Labour History Archive and Study Centre (LHASC): Colin Beever papers (BEE), 1/5/1 – ‘LCMC Membership Jan 1962’; BEE, 1/5/1 – ‘LCE/LCMC Structure’, undated.

that figure had more than doubled, and by 1971 the LCE (as it now was) included nearly 100 MPs.<sup>170</sup> The majority of this enlarged group were revisionist in affiliation, including most of the idealistic, youthful members who had been elected during the intervening decade: indeed, of the 17 prominent young MPs identified by Douglas Evans as ‘having connections’ with the Gaitskellite CDS – which included such future luminaries as Bill Rodgers and David Owen – only two (John Gilbert and Brian Walden) were opposed to EEC membership.<sup>171</sup>

The nature of the anti-Marketeer bloc was somewhat different. The 35 Labour rebels who had opposed entry during a parliamentary vote in May 1967 were predominantly left-wing, although a select few, such as Eddie Milne and Gwyneth Dunwoody, did emerge from the centre-right.<sup>172</sup> This low figure was largely due to abiding loyalty within the PLP towards the Government, but it nonetheless presaged the formation of a new committee, the Labour Committee for Safeguards on the Common Market (LCSCM), which aimed to counteract the LCE’s propaganda activities by mobilising opinion inside the constituency Labour parties (CLPs).<sup>173</sup> The LCSCM was restricted in impact by its status as a ‘purely Labour affair’, however, and it was only after the establishment of the cross-party Common Market Safeguards Campaign (CMSC) in 1970 that opposition to the EEC began to crystallise as a wide-ranging movement.<sup>174</sup> Several moderate Labour MPs were among the new body’s patrons, featuring prominently due to the absence of left-wing radicals (who were disdainful of any alliances with the Conservatives). Not only were older, established Gaitskellites such as Reg Prentice and the economist William Pickles involved in one group or the other, but so too were a few young ‘Centre or Right-Centre’ MPs that Jay considered to be the ‘most

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<sup>170</sup> LHASC, BEE, 1/5/1 – ‘[List of LCE members], September 1971’.

<sup>171</sup> Douglas Evans, *While Britain Slept: The Selling of the Common Market* (London, 1975), pp. 59-60.

<sup>172</sup> *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, volume 746, columns 1650-5, 10 May 1967.

<sup>173</sup> *Times*, 27 November 1967.

<sup>174</sup> Uwe Kitzinger, *Diplomacy and Persuasion: How Britain Joined the Common Market* (London, 1973), p. 234; BLPES, Campaign for an Independent Britain (CIB) papers, 1/1 – ‘CMSC Statement of Aims’, undated (c. 1970).

active’ of all – men such as Eric Deakins, Michael English and John Gilbert.<sup>175</sup> Both the LCSCM and the CMSC were chaired by Jay himself, confirming his status as the most visible revisionist anti-Marketeer from within Labour’s ranks.

After the second application collapsed a wellspring of ill-feeling towards Europe once again began to form in the party. As early as 1968, Ernest Wistrich, then director of the organisation ‘Britain in Europe’, claimed that the LCE had become aware of the ‘growing gap’ between the political class at Westminster and ‘Labour opinion in the constituencies’, which was increasingly influenced by hard-left activism.<sup>176</sup> This process accelerated after the Conservatives under Edward Heath won the 1970 general election on the promise of launching a third application, and in August that year a motion at the party conference ruling out membership was only narrowly defeated.<sup>177</sup> The catalyst for this new outbreak of antagonism was the *terms* of entry, which became closely associated with the identity of the Government pursuing them: it was these ‘Tory terms’ that became emblematic of the ‘sellout’ many anti-Marketeers believed was just around the corner. Opposing Heath’s new application therefore became seen as a test of loyalty for all party members, despite the fact they were based to a large extent on the Labour Government’s negotiations in 1967, something which George Thomson, the chief negotiator at the time, and the former foreign secretary, Michael Stewart, tirelessly sought to explain.<sup>178</sup>

Aware of the changing mood, Wilson quickly adopted a position that gave him space for manoeuvre, expressing his dissatisfaction at the Heath Government’s actions without actually ruling out the possibility of membership. Once the terms were established, it was

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<sup>175</sup> BLPES, CIB, 1/1 – Letter: Douglas Jay to Robin Williams, with sponsorship list, 7 January 1970; Jay, *Change and Fortune*, p. 451.

<sup>176</sup> WES, Brown, MS.Eng.c.5096 – Letter: Ernest Wistrich to George Brown, 23 October 1968.

<sup>177</sup> Labour Party, *Report of the 69th Annual Conference (LPACR)*, 1970, p. 200.

<sup>178</sup> *Labour and the Common Market: The Labour Party Report of the Special Conference on the Common Market, 17 July 1971*, pp. 11-12; LHASC, Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) papers – PLP meeting minutes, 9 June 1971.

clear that entry would be confirmed by means of a parliamentary vote. Both sides of the debate quickly engaged in tit-for-tat manoeuvres, as they tried to win over the swathe of undecided MPs. An early-day motion condemning the application to join – put forward in parliament by the Tribune John Silkin – in January 1971 attracted 133 Labour signatures, just under half of the PLP, while on 11 May the LCE responded by preparing a statement endorsing membership, which was published in the *Guardian* with the support of exactly 100 MPs.<sup>179</sup> During the summer of 1971 several meetings were organised to allow the PLP to examine the issue, while two other occasions later that year maximised the opportunity for further discussion: the first was a special one-day conference for all members on 17 July, where the attendees rejected the Government's terms by over 2 to 1, while in late October a series of debates on membership were hosted in the House of Commons prior to the vote that determined Britain's entry into the EEC, which ended up with 69 Labour MPs voting in favour – disobeying a three-line whip to vote against – as part of an overall majority of 112.<sup>180</sup> It is how these arguments were conducted among the Labour right in particular, and the questions of ethos which emerged, that is the focus of the following two sections.

### **The 1971 debates: élitism and populism**

One aspect of the 1971 debates that became a signature feature was the emergence of a strain of overtly 'anti-élitist' rhetoric among opponents of EEC membership. Perhaps the best term for describing such feeling would be *populism*: an outpouring of emotion and discontent that rallied against an 'élite' which was perceived as acting against the interests of ordinary

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<sup>179</sup> *Times*, 16 July 1971; *Guardian*, 11 May 1971.

<sup>180</sup> See Appendix 1 for a full list of the 69 'rebels'.

workers and their families. The anti-EEC populists' enemy was, unsurprisingly, the 'top people' that Gaitskell had so roundly criticised: but whereas his ire had been restricted to the usual targets of socialist invective – such as the City, civil service and 'Tory' MPs – by the 1970s the Labour anti-Marketeters' anger had expanded to include the right-wing 'Europeans' (as they were often labelled at the time) in their own party, who they believed not only abetted this 'establishment' but were actively a part of it.<sup>181</sup> The notion that pro-EEC social-democrats were establishmentarians has served to conflate them in common imagination with revisionism and bourgeois 'intellectual' politics, and this has been reflected in subsequent studies of the debate. Harry Lazer, for example, who wrote a defining journal article on anti-EEC populism, described the supporters of entry as 'the party's middle-class members', with all that implies. Robins, similarly, has categorised the situation as one of 'conflict between fundamentalists and revisionists [which] developed along populist-élitist lines', claiming that the 'majority of pro-Market Members' (i.e. revisionists) were 'untouched by class sentiment'.<sup>182</sup>

There is inevitably some truth to this portrayal: many Marketeters were indeed middle-class and had the educational background to go with it, with 34 of those MPs who ended up either supporting entry or abstaining from the vote (out of 89 in total) possessing Oxbridge degrees.<sup>183</sup> But such generalisations perpetuate the idea that Europe was an issue which divided revisionists from everyone else, and that this division aligned with the populist/élitist bifurcation defined above. The reality was in fact more complex: many of the 69 rebels were not actually the bourgeois 'new men' that Tom Nairn had identified as constituting the bulk of the party's Marketeters, but older right-wing MPs with a long-standing belief in European

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<sup>181</sup> See, for example, Stephen Haseler, 'The Establishment, the Socialists and the Common Market', *Tribune*, 22 October 1971.

<sup>182</sup> Harry Lazer, 'British Populism: The Labour Party and the Common Market Parliamentary Debate', *Political Science Quarterly*, 91:2 (1976), p. 259; Robins, *Reluctant Party*, pp. 84, 90.

<sup>183</sup> Uwe Kitzinger, 'Anatomy of a Rebellion', *New Society*, 4 May 1972.

unity who were – as Roy Jenkins said of one of them, the Scottish MP George Lawson – far from being members ‘of the metropolitan liberal establishment’.<sup>184</sup> More importantly, however, these diagnoses fail to register the revulsion that several revisionists felt towards the ‘privileged’ attitudes they discerned within their own midst. It was this latter factor, more than any other, which made accusations of ‘élitism’ potentially troublesome for the Labour right, as the voices of ‘traditionalist’ anti-Market discourse were further amplified by revisionist discontent.

One of the first populist ‘antis’ to go on the attack was the academic and party activist Stephen Haseler, later described in the *Times* as ‘a leading figure among Labour’s anti-Marketeers’<sup>185</sup>, who penned an article for *Tribune* in June 1971 in which he alleged that ‘a severe epidemic of elitism has broken out on the revisionist wing of the Labour Party’, led by a cadre of pro-EEC ‘liberal socialists’ who wished ‘to impose their views on the rest of us.’ Haseler wrote that élitist attitudes towards Europe were based upon a refusal to accept that Britain ‘remains a predominantly working-class country... a society which is still unwilling to hand over every decision to the experts and technocrats, all of whom are thoroughly middle-class in their outlook and value system’. The Marketeers’ stridency, he argued, meant that Europe was the one issue which was ‘most amenable to a class interpretation’, as the EEC was supported in the CLPs and among general society by articulate, middle-class professionals such as teachers, advertising executives and lawyers, whose advocacy of entry was unaffected by popular antagonism towards it. Haseler warned that, if the vote on entry was carried in favour, then Labour’s ‘association in the public mind with ordinary values and popular sovereignty’ would be put at risk.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Nairn, ‘The Left Against Europe?’, p. 74n; Roy Jenkins, *Life at the Centre*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London, 1994), p. 323.

<sup>185</sup> *Times*, 9 November 1971.

<sup>186</sup> Stephen Haseler, ‘The Gaitskellites and the Common Market’, *Tribune*, 18 June 1971.

Much of this *agitprop* could have been written by any soft-left Tribunite *apparatchik*; what made Haseler's arguments more incendiary was that they came from the perspective of a convinced Gaitskellite, who used the memory of 1962 to argue that a class-based rationale for opposing entry was intrinsic to social-democratic political thought. If Hugh Gaitskell were alive, Haseler wrote in his *Tribune* piece, he would be 'leading the Labour Party against entry into the Common Market': this was because he was a democrat who 'believed that people's strongly held opinions on such an historic issue should not be lightly brushed aside by those who claim expert knowledge and superior judgement'.<sup>187</sup> In the aftermath of the Commons vote Haseler and five anti-EEC Labour MPs (Brian Walden, Laurie Pavitt, Eddie Milne, Roland Moyle and Eric Deakins) wrote a letter to the *Times*, jibing against the 'inaccurate portrayal' in the press of the pro-Marketees as synonymous with the right while simultaneously identifying the 'antis' as the 'old ideological left wing'. Instead, they proclaimed themselves to be the 'true heirs' of Gaitskell, declaring that EEC membership was 'not for Britain compatible with the ideals of social-democracy'.<sup>188</sup>

Another revisionist with similar, if more nuanced, reservations was perhaps the most illustrious of them all, Anthony Crosland. Unlike Haseler and Gaitskell, though, Crosland was never outrightly hostile to the EEC: his position has been described by one of his key confidants as vacillating 'between a greater and a lesser enthusiasm', and in public he always insisted that his stance had not changed since he supported the Labour Government's decision to apply for entry four years previously.<sup>189</sup> But he moderated that support by conceding that he did not think the country's future would be 'decisively affected one way or another by the Common Market'; as an issue, he claimed, it was much lower down his list of

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<sup>187</sup> Haseler, 'Gaitskellites and the Common Market'.

<sup>188</sup> *Times*, 20 November 1971.

<sup>189</sup> David Lipsey, 'Crosland's Socialism', in Lipsey and Dick Leonard (eds), *The Socialist Agenda: Crosland's Legacy* (London, 1981), p. 24; BLPES, Anthony Crosland papers, 4/9 – Speech on Common Market, undated [1971].

‘priorities’ than those of housing, employment and economic growth (see also chapter four).<sup>190</sup> What worried him was the potential Europe had for dividing the party – and unlike other Marketeers it was his own side, and not the anti-EEC loyalists, that he held mostly responsible for stoking tensions.<sup>191</sup>

Indeed, so concerned did Crosland become about the damage being caused by partisan Marketeers that he delivered a speech to his constituency party in July airing his fears that an ‘elitist faction’ of right-wing intellectuals was emerging with the potential to become a ‘party within a party’, a warning that became common knowledge after the *Sunday Times* reported its contents.<sup>192</sup> Crosland did not reveal who the members of this faction were, but they likely approximated to those names that appeared on a list of ‘European diehards’ he later drew up – a roll-call of 32 MPs, which included important figures from Jenkins’s entourage such as Bill Rodgers and Dick Taverne.<sup>193</sup> When the former CDS activist and Oxford alderman Frank Pickstock – alarmed by another newspaper article which scurrilously claimed that Crosland was about to ‘switch horses’ and vote with the ‘antis’ – wrote to persuade him that the anti-EEC left was using the issue to ‘destroy the right’, the latter responded that it ‘is certainly not the case in Parliament that the antis represent solely the Old Left’, adding that Gaitskell had ‘came out against Europe’ because he understood that the right should never isolate itself from the ‘moderate Centre’ as represented by ‘[the trade union leader] Vic Feather, Bob Mellish and many... Trade Union M.Ps’.<sup>194</sup>

Crosland’s determination not to ‘desert’ his party and vote with the Conservative Government led him to abstain from voting on 28 October, alongside 19 others. But how did

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<sup>190</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 4/9 – Statement on the Common Market, 29 October 1971; *Sunday Times*, 11 July 1971; Giles Radice, *Friends and Rivals: Crosland, Jenkins and Healey* (London, 2002), p. 194.

<sup>191</sup> See also Stephen Meredith, ‘A Catalyst for Secession? European Divisions on the Parliamentary Right of the Labour Party 1962–72 and the Schism of British Social Democracy’, *Historical Research*, 85 (2012), p. 341.

<sup>192</sup> *Sunday Times*, 11 July 1971.

<sup>193</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 4/9 – ‘List of European Diehards’, undated (1971).

<sup>194</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 4/9 – Letters: Frank Pickstock to Anthony Crosland, 10 July 1971; Anthony Crosland to Frank Pickstock, 13 July 1971.

those who persisted in supporting entry respond to the anti-Marketeters' charge that they were an élitist faction? Many chose to imply that they were authentic products of the Labour movement, not least by evoking their support for the Community's supposedly socialist ideals. This juxtaposition was summed up by Phillip Whitehead, in a speech given to the Commons during the parliamentary vote:

It is not the Euro-fanatic's Europe, the Europe of the Eurocrats or the Europe of an intellectual élite. My father's people and mine were spear carriers in the European wars. My kind of people were always killed on the first day of the battle. I would not claim that I am a part of a wider, more sophisticated, élitist European culture.

Where else in the world, he asked, 'do the pre-conditions for democratic Socialism exist in so wide a measure? Free trade unions, democratic traditions, an industrial proletariat – all these things help us.'<sup>195</sup> William Hannan, a working-class Glasgow MP, also tried to dispel the aura of privilege that surrounded the EEC, stating that he would be voting for the 'Social-democratic Europe of Willy Brandt, the common market of millions and millions of other Socialists and trades-unionists'.<sup>196</sup> Even the arch-revisionist John P. Mackintosh, addressing the PLP in May, declared that membership could help 'us achieve the Socialist society we wanted', proclaiming the need at the special conference 'to defend the British working class' by creating the conditions for socialism to flourish in a united Europe.<sup>197</sup>

It is fair to say that most anti-Marketeters were unconvinced by this rhetoric, not least because the pro-EEC social-democrats' real idea of 'Europe', when stripped of such evocative rhetoric, conformed to a reformist worldview of consensual change rather than one

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<sup>195</sup> *Hansard*, 823, cols. 2001-2, 27 October 1971.

<sup>196</sup> *Hansard*, 823, col. 1670, 26 October 1971.

<sup>197</sup> LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 20 May 1971; *Labour and the Common Market*, p. 28.

of socialist transformation. Hence the welfare economist Alan Day's suggestion in *Socialist Commentary* that a salient feature of 'continental socialism' was the 'lack of ideology' which it had bequeathed to European politics, something the Marketeer MP Ivor Richard cited approvingly as influencing the 'pragmatism and... flexibility' of the EEC.<sup>198</sup> This was clearly meant to reassure anti-Marketees of a 'moderate' stamp, but it instead paradoxically reinforced their belief that left-wing democratic parties lacked the strength and willpower to control a bureaucracy as remote and powerful as the Community. Stephen Haseler, for example, fulminated that 'continental socialist élites appear to have abdicated from ideology and to have sunk back into a lethargic acceptance of the managerial cartel-based state' epitomised by the EEC – a very different perspective on the pragmatism of European social-democracy from that expressed by Day and Richard.<sup>199</sup> The more mild-mannered John Gilbert was similarly dubious, arguing that if a pan-European 'democratic Labour Movement' did somehow form its chances of 'having any real influence on decision making was virtually nil'.<sup>200</sup>

But perhaps the most profound reason as to why the anti-Market populists were so sensitive to élitism is because the Government's entitlement to make decisions on issues of this magnitude raised concerns about the democratic legitimacy of entry. Unlike Ireland, Norway and Denmark – all of which were submitting applications to the Community at the same time – no provision for a nationwide referendum to confirm entry had been made. Nor had a special general election been called, as in 1970 all of the main parties had pledged in their manifestos to commence a further application if they won. By relying on the outcome of parliamentary procedure the political class thus left itself open to the charge that it was unconcerned about what individual citizens had to say about such wide-ranging constitutional

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<sup>198</sup> Alan Day, 'Socialists and European Unity', *Socialist Commentary*, August 1971; *Hansard*, 823, col. 2151, 28 October 1971.

<sup>199</sup> Haseler, 'The Establishment, the Socialists and the Common Market'.

<sup>200</sup> LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 14 July 1971.

change – especially as there was little chance that the ‘antis’ would win the vote in the House of Commons. Worse, it was Labour’s Marketeers who were at particular risk from any fallout, as it was their convictions that traversed the already existing division between enlightened liberalism and the inclinations of the multitude.

Whether out of a sense of opportunism or genuine outrage, this was a state of affairs which ‘antis’ pounced on with relish. During the debates in the House, many Labour MPs alluded to a widespread conviction that the general populace would not tolerate membership. This conviction often represented the myopia of the constituency-minded representative, who is inclined to think that a bulging post-bag is indicative of a groundswell of feeling, but there was also documentary evidence that confirmed what they believed. In opinion polls conducted in March, May and June 1971 the numbers against British membership of the EEC were put at 66 per cent, 65 per cent and 58 per cent respectively.<sup>201</sup> Robert Shepherd has found that by July 1971 only 15 per cent of Labour voters supported entry; this signified a marked change from late 1969, when Labourites were more positive about membership than Conservative voters. This was largely because ‘working people’, ‘housewives’ and ‘old-age pensioners’ were now the groups most likely to viewing themselves as possible ‘victims’ of the consequences of joining. Shepherd attributes this shift to two factors: the ‘small-c’ conservatism of working-class Labour voters, and their propensity to follow ‘political cues’ during the party’s shift from a pro- to an anti-EEC standpoint.<sup>202</sup>

Thus Peter Hardy, a staunch right-winger and later Anthony Crosland’s parliamentary private secretary (PPS), informed the Commons on 21 October that the ‘vast proportion of my constituents [in Rother Valley] appeared to be strongly opposed to entry’. ‘We now have a government’, he continued, which ‘[is] telling people in western Europe that it does not

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<sup>201</sup> Patrick Bell, *The Labour Party in Opposition* (London, 2004), p. 197n.

<sup>202</sup> Robert Shepherd, *Public Opinion and European Integration* (Farnborough, 1975), pp. 211-4.

matter that the great majority of people in this country are opposed to entry'.<sup>203</sup> The Welsh moderate Gwynoro Jones spoke on a similar theme a few days later, stating that 'the views of the British people have been ignored altogether and they feel that they have no rights... the British people are losing faith in democracy and politicians', while Michael Cocks reported that many voters in his constituency had become 'cynical' and fatalistic, telling him they felt the decision had been made 'cut and dried' and that it was little use asking them.<sup>204</sup> The most sustained attack came from Fred Peart, a usually genial loyalist who had previously served in Wilson's cabinet:

There has been too much intellectual arrogance and élitist thinking on this matter, and individuals who have advocated their case have displayed a remarkable arrogance to those who have disagreed with the Establishment. Those individuals have dismissed the views of ordinary men and women.<sup>205</sup>

Such is an intemperate example of what had become common populist discourse, experienced on the Labour right as much as on the left.

The anti-Marketeters' objections raised the question of what method should be chosen to supersede the vote in the House of Commons. For advocates of parliamentary democracy like Hardy, the preferred route was to fight another general election on an explicitly anti-Market manifesto.<sup>206</sup> The attraction of the referendum option, on the other hand, was that it would carry the explicit confirmation of public approval. Writing for the *Times* in 1970, Douglas Jay maintained that entry was so unprecedented a transformation of the British

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<sup>203</sup> *Hansard*, 823, cols. 1046-8, 21 October 1971.

<sup>204</sup> *Hansard*, 823, col. 2015, 27 October 1971; *Hansard*, 823, col. 1940, 27 October 1971.

<sup>205</sup> *Hansard*, 823, col. 1097, 22 October 1971.

<sup>206</sup> *Hansard*, 823, col. 1049, 21 October 1971; LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 19 July 1971.

constitutional framework that it could only be answered by a specific ‘appeal to the electorate’, with the role of parliament and government going no further than negotiating with the Community over the terms of entry.<sup>207</sup> Jay emerged as one of the most earliest and articulate supporters of a referendum, but he was by no means the only important advocate: Tony Benn, then heading towards the left of the party, soon took up the cause with enthusiasm, while a group of 29 MPs from both major parties had called for one as early as June 1970.<sup>208</sup> During the Commons debates the following year, the anti-EEC moderate Brynmor John echoed Jay’s arguments when declaring that ‘only the electorate as a whole can decide’, while Michael Cocks lampooned the father of parliamentary doctrine, Edmund Burke, by observing that planners in Bristol had situated a public lavatory next to his statue.<sup>209</sup>

Furthermore, the most assiduous in their calls for a referendum often liked to boost the ‘populist’ nature of their case by highlighting the ‘democratic deficit’ that would emerge should Britain become an EEC member. Michael English, for instance, asserted in the Commons that the Community’s legislative apparatus, in the form of an unelected Assembly, was structured in a way that ‘does not necessarily represent the beliefs of the electorates of the countries concerned. In practice it is powerless.’ Membership meant ceding power ‘not to another European House, not to a European democratic Assembly’, but to a series of bureaucratic executive bodies which would ‘deal and compromise in private’. Not that English was motivated purely by a disinterested focus on constitutional arrangements, for running through these arguments was a conflation of democratic values with British exceptionalism. ‘The oldest democracy in Europe’, he proclaimed, has ‘traditions of democracy which the major powers of Europe have not got and have not had for less than one

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<sup>207</sup> *Times*, 1 August 1970.

<sup>208</sup> *Times*, 30 June 1970.

<sup>209</sup> *Hansard*, 823, col. 1939, 27 October 1971.

man's lifetime'. This, it appears, deepened his belief that a vote for Europe was a vote for extinguishing popular privileges: 'I cannot, and I will not vote on any occasion to deprive the people of this country of the rights they have.'<sup>210</sup>

Talk of a referendum and the importance of majority opinion confronted the Marketeers with a dilemma: should they concede the strength of the criticisms made against their position, or continue maintaining their justifications for potentially flouting the national will? Several remained unrepentant in believing that they reserved the right to make a judgement as they saw fit. 'What would the public think of the Labour Party,' Edmund Dell rhetorically asked a constituent days before the vote, if

... on a matter of this importance, it was found that that not one of those [pro-EEC] Labour M.P.s had been prepared to take into the lobby with him his honest judgment of the interests of this country and of his constituents?

His answer was that parliamentarians should 'act honestly' and 'not just as lobby fodder' on questions of 'grave importance'.<sup>211</sup> There was some evidence to suggest that the general public, despite in some cases disagreeing with the Marketeers, endorsed this viewpoint. One of the more venerable of Labour's 'Europeans', Carol Johnson, rebutted the views of 'antis' like Cocks by citing a recent survey (conducted in the Erith and Crayford constituency) which found that 70 per cent of respondents agreed that MPs should vote on the issue 'according to [their] own view'.<sup>212</sup> Similarly, the reason why Phillip Whitehead concluded that it should remain the duty of MPs to decide such issues was because while 'talking to

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<sup>210</sup> *Hansard*, 823, cols. 1151-3, 22 October 1971.

<sup>211</sup> WES, Papers of Edmund Dell, MS.Eng.c.7591 – Letter: Edmund Dell to Barbara Bagnall, 23 October 1971.

<sup>212</sup> Johnson erroneously reported the figure as 80 per cent. See National Library of Scotland (NLS), Papers of George Lawson, Acc. 9588/86 – Circular letter from James Wellbeloved with constituency survey attached, 20 October 1971; *Hansard*, 823, cols. 1168-9, 22 October 1971.

[his] electors on this subject' he realised they felt the same.<sup>213</sup> Dell himself was informed by a constituent that a friend of hers 'had real faith again in the Party when there were people who were prepared to vote and stick to their principles'.<sup>214</sup> Experiences like these helped to cement the view among Labour's Marketeers that their stance, far from ignoring the *vox populi*, was actually in accordance with it.

A belief in the primacy of parliamentary sovereignty thus became a hallmark of the pro-EEC defence, which several MPs used to scotch any talk of a referendum: Sir Geoffrey de Freitas, to give one example, had already written in 1970 about the dangers of a single binary choice, not least that 'in such an atmosphere there would be no room for reasoned argument'.<sup>215</sup> But the problem with such assertions is that they often struck the anti-Marketeers as yet more evidence of élitist *noblesse oblige*. When Roy Jenkins contended that a referendum was not simply an inappropriate device with which to gauge the political climate but a 'powerful continuing weapon against progressive legislation', it gave the impression that he held a rather low estimate of popular opinion. Writing in 1972, he voiced the worry that holding national votes on divisive issues would give tribal party politicians the opportunity to take advantage of mass ignorance:

Apart from the obvious example of capital punishment, I would not in these circumstances fancy the chances, to take a few random but important examples, of many measures to improve race relations, or to extend public ownership, or to advance the right of individual dissent.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> *Hansard*, 823, col. 1999, 27 October 1971.

<sup>214</sup> WES, Dell, MS.Eng.c.7591 – Letter: 'Doreen' to Edmund Dell, undated (1971).

<sup>215</sup> LHASC, BEE, 1/4/3 – Geoffrey de Freitas, 'A Referendum and a Pat of Butter', *Into Europe*, December 1970.

<sup>216</sup> Churchill Archives Centre, University of Cambridge (CAC), Papers of Austen Albu (ALBU), Box 36 – Letter: Roy Jenkins to Harold Wilson, 10 April 1972.

Comments made by Jenkins's supporters during the debates left a similar impression: Bill Rodgers argued that a 'referendum on keeping the blacks out would win strong support from amongst Labour voters', while David Marquand, speaking at a PLP meeting where tempers were already frayed, asserted that politicians should 'not take too much notice of public opinion which had always been reactionary.'<sup>217</sup> Although perhaps logically consistent, for Labour politicians to uphold such views seemed to betray the party's democratic spirit and their own egalitarian principles.

### **The 1971 debates: rationality and irrationality**

The traditional mode of analysis when analysing the European question has been to examine the objective and rational grounding of the arguments that preoccupied either side – the 'case' put forward to each other and to the people. This was particularly so for the revisionists, whose creed placed a high premium on the need for objective evidence and a mindset unclouded by sentiment. But rationality, as Gaitskell's performance at Brighton in 1962 demonstrated, was not necessarily the determining factor that shaped people's opinions on the matter. Political philosophy, after all, is the result not just of empirical observations but of value-laden belief systems, and by touching on questions of identity, sovereignty and democracy the clashes over Europe frequently brought the conflict between rational understanding and the deeper, emotional impulses that the subject aroused out into the open. As the anti-EEC MP Laurie Pavitt remarked during the 1971 Commons debates, 'We are emotional and logical, rational and irrational, on the subject. That is humanity itself.'<sup>218</sup> This

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<sup>217</sup> Bill Rodgers, 'Personal Column', *Socialist Commentary*, October 1971; LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 14 July 1971.

<sup>218</sup> *Hansard*, 823, col. 1056, 21 October 1971.

was confirmed in retrospect by many of those who had participated at the time: David Marquand commented 20 years afterwards that the debates unleashed ‘sentiments that... made it possible for this very profound and deep split to occur’, while the LCE member and historian Roger Broad observed in 2001 that for most Labour MPs ‘attitudes were based on profound feelings, barely touched by argument. Each had his own reason on his side’.<sup>219</sup>

So, it was perhaps no surprise that both sides produced arguments that their opponents considered to be lacking in reason. Take, for example, one fundamental aspect of the pro-EEC agenda – the need to illustrate the material benefits that came with Community membership. Throughout 1971, several pro-EEC MPs implied (inadvertently or otherwise) that they had lost confidence in the ability of British governments, including those of their own party, to save the country from the slough of economic despond, and that this was why European help was urgently needed. Both Marquand and Roy Hattersley referred in their Commons speeches in October to the economic tribulations of the 1964–70 administration, which the former suggested were proof that ‘it is not possible... to create the kind of Socialist society we want in isolation from the rest of Western Europe’.<sup>220</sup> Much of the literature produced by the pro-Market campaigns alluded repeatedly to the higher standard of living and increased gross domestic product (GDP) that was enjoyed on the continent, with the implication that such a future awaited Britain if she too joined the Community and left her dispiriting ‘offshore’ existence behind.<sup>221</sup> It was apparent certainties of this kind that compelled the fervent ‘pro’ Christopher Mayhew to state in a PLP meeting that ‘it was nonsense to say there was no connection between the formation of the Common Market and

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<sup>219</sup> Witness Seminar, ‘Labour Committee for Europe’, *Contemporary Record*, 7:2 (1993), p. 389; Roger Broad, *Labour’s European Dilemmas: from Bevin to Blair* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 81.

<sup>220</sup> *Hansard*, 823, col. 1914, 27 October 1971.

<sup>221</sup> LHASC, BEE 1/1/2 – Peter Stephenson, ‘Common Market Equals Higher Standard of Living’, *Europe Left*, September 1970.

the rise in living standards and growth in the Six' – a clear example of the belief that correlation equals causation.<sup>222</sup>

But their optimism touched a nerve among many moderate 'antis', who detected in this feature of their case a seemingly irrational conviction that the Community was the only panacea for Britain's ills – an attitude that they summarised as 'declinist' at home and Panglossian abroad. Brian Walden, having originally been favourable to entry, accused his erstwhile comrades in October of growing 'sick of crisis after crisis... and they do not believe that Britain, as an independent country, can solve her own problems.'<sup>223</sup> Another MP with reservations was Bruce Millan, who told the PLP that 'there was a loss of confidence in our ability to look after our own affairs. [I do] not accept that proposition [my]self... people who thought entering [the] EEC would prove an easy solution to our problems were going to be disappointed.'<sup>224</sup> Jeffrey Thomas pointed out that there was 'no guarantee of growth in Europe', while John Gilbert maintained that even if economic conditions in the Community were positive there was no reason to believe that Britain would automatically benefit from them: 'I have not heard a single shred of evidence to establish a causal connection between those two postulates.'<sup>225</sup> Their objections mimicked Gaitskell's rhetoric in the early 1960s, when he opined that growth in Europe was not inevitable and that Britain's economic problems were primarily of her own making and could only be solved at home.<sup>226</sup>

Some of Labour's 'Europeans', such as Bill Rodgers, were alert enough to deny that the Community was any kind of cure-all, rather than simply an opportunity which Britain should take if she wanted to maximise her chances of benefiting in the future.<sup>227</sup> But others were irritated by the anti-Marketeters' objections, feeling that the significance of membership

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<sup>222</sup> LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 16 June 1971.

<sup>223</sup> *Times*, 4 October 1971.

<sup>224</sup> LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 14 July 1971.

<sup>225</sup> *Hansard*, 823, col. 1971, 27 October 1971; *Hansard*, 823, col. 2138, 28 October 1971.

<sup>226</sup> BLPES, Hetherington, 3/28 – 'Meeting with Mr. Gaitskell, 17 April 1962'.

<sup>227</sup> *Hansard*, 823, col. 945, 21 October 1971.

lay beyond economic details. This led several of them to express impatience with the granular nature of some sceptical analyses, such as those advanced by Jay. George Lawson, for example, told his colleagues in frustration during a PLP meeting on 16 June that there were ‘too many “shop-keeper” arguments against entry’ (i.e. trivial ‘nitpicking’ over economic issues such as food prices) when the important thing was ‘the future of our people’.<sup>228</sup> A similar disregard for pettifogging criticism led the recently ennobled Lord George-Brown, whose reliance on the ‘bigger picture’ was well known from his time as Foreign Secretary, to lecture his ‘British colleagues’ during the party conference in October for focusing only on the ‘immediate and short-term consequences’ of entry, which, he alleged, had resulted in them trying to ‘shrink away from this historic challenge’.<sup>229</sup>

Arguments like these caused the more populist anti-Marketeters, in retaliation, to suspect that the Labour Marketeters’ ‘élitism’ left them bored by the pragmatic, everyday objectives upon which revisionism in particular depended, preferring to be spirited away to what Tom Nairn called ‘the reformed world of [their] ideals’.<sup>230</sup> In his autobiography Douglas Jay maintained that ‘liberals’ were attracted to the EEC because it was ‘progressive and new’, allowing them to concentrate on more exalted things than ‘sordid, backstairs subjects’ such as ‘housing, food prices and old-age pensions’. He identified Jenkins as particularly susceptible to this ‘drawing-room form of radicalism’, comparing him unfavourably with Gaitskill, whom Jay believed to be ‘immune’ to such shallow considerations.<sup>231</sup> Stephen Haseler also castigated internationally-minded ‘pros’ like Brown and Lawson for their apparent indifference to ‘bread-and-butter issues’ while chastising ‘ordinary people’ for ignoring ‘the historic, visionary, messianic opportunities’ that

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<sup>228</sup> LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 16 June 1971.

<sup>229</sup> *Labour Weekly*, 8 October 1971.

<sup>230</sup> Tom Nairn, ‘British Nationalism and the EEC’, *New Left Review*, 69 (1971), p. 21.

<sup>231</sup> Jay, *Change and Fortune*, pp. 283-4.

membership had to offer.<sup>232</sup> Both men concurred that the Marketeers were not simply lacking in practical-minded good sense, but suffered from delusions caused by an irrational *faith* in their ideals: Jay later denounced Jenkins and Bill Rodgers as ‘extremists’ for whom ‘the pro-Market doctrine had become a religion, transcending all other loyalties’, while Haseler offered even more lurid generalisations about the ‘slightly unhinged nature of Eurofanaticism’, mocking the ‘almost revivalist air’ he had claimed to witness at pro-EEC gatherings.<sup>233</sup>

Outbursts of excessive, idealistic fervour regarding the possibilities of membership may have annoyed the ‘antis’, but the ‘pros’ often felt the same way towards them when it came to more specific arguments concerning international sovereignty and Britain’s place in the global future. In their view, entering the Community presented a tangible possibility for achieving a new, improved relationship with her closest neighbours; to ignore such an opportunity not only risked inviting a gloomy and more ‘inward looking’ future, but it would send an unflattering signal that the nation was not ready to open itself to the idea of a genuinely modern new world order. These ideals could be defended as authentically ‘revisionist’ and rational in the same way that anti-Marketeers such as Jay considered an attention to economic facts to be. After all, one purpose of evolutionary social-democracy was to adjust to necessary change; why would anyone not opt for that, the Marketeers seemed to wonder, unless they had a perverse dislike of the outside world?

The Labour ‘European’ who had most thought through the implications of such problems was the Scottish MP John P. Mackintosh. A close associate of Roy Jenkins, Mackintosh used the debates as an opportunity to advance a view of sovereignty that went beyond the confines of national boundaries. He contended during the Commons debates that

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<sup>232</sup> Haseler, ‘Gaitskellites and the Common Market’.

<sup>233</sup> Jay, *Change and Fortune*, p. 460; Haseler, ‘The Establishment, the Socialists and the Common Market’.

‘no nation has untrammelled sovereignty, no nation has complete power to do what it likes, and what matters to the public is not the legal power to act but whether the consequences may mean anything.’ ‘Pooling’ sovereignty, he claimed, ensured that European nations could collectively act on a global stage, both in terms of foreign and economic policy. Mackintosh lambasted the ‘antis’ for their backward ‘19<sup>th</sup>-century concept of sovereignty’, which he compared to an old lady with a basket of apples ‘who feels that each time she gives a bit of sovereignty... to someone else there is one less [apple] in her basket.’<sup>234</sup> At the heart of these arguments was his belief that Britain, now relieved of the burdens of her empire, should resolve to accept the reality of her second-class status by seeking out peaceful co-operation with ‘the Six’. At a PLP meeting on 20 May, Mackintosh argued that if the country was to realistically conduct its diplomatic affairs without any lingering imperial pretensions, then it ‘could no longer continue as a minor partner of the United States’ either, but must throw in its lot with Europe.<sup>235</sup> This theme had already been raised in the public pronouncements of Jenkins himself, who had warned spectators at an LCE meeting in 1970 that although close Atlantic ties were desirable the ‘power disparity’ was too ‘vast’ for there to be any notion of a ‘special relationship’.<sup>236</sup>

Allied to these humble convictions was a belief that shared sovereignty and responsibility would transform social attitudes, allowing citizens to become more engaged with the rest of the world. Mackintosh spoke in May of how entry would ‘restore our self-confidence and create an outward-looking society’.<sup>237</sup> Joining the Community, he averred, would be a leap towards a modern future away from the failures of the past – a ‘small sign that we are prepared to change, prepared to move’. Those who disliked that prospect, for

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<sup>234</sup> *Hansard*, 823, cols. 2019-20, 27 October 1971.

<sup>235</sup> LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 20 May 1971.

<sup>236</sup> NLS, Lawson, Acc. 9588/84 – Roy Jenkins, ‘The Choice Before Us’, 28 September 1970.

<sup>237</sup> LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 20 May 1971.

whatever reason, he dismissed as ‘fearful people’.<sup>238</sup> Such pejorative inferences rarely specified particular targets, but it was obvious that Mackintosh was thinking of the atavistic tendencies of the ‘traditionalist’, non-revisionist elements in the party, which in his judgement included not only the orthodox socialist left but what he called the ‘populist-socialists’ on the centre and right (see also chapter five); these people were, Mackintosh believed, ‘suspicious of foreigners’, and he attributed their opposition to membership as symptomatic of class resentment and an irrational ‘fear of change’.<sup>239</sup> He was not the only one to use this kind of language about the ‘antis’. The revisionist writer Anthony Comerford described them as suffering from ‘isolationist prejudice’, while Willie Hamilton called them ‘international chauvinists’ who did not understand that ‘we could not draw lines at Dover’.<sup>240</sup>

Of course, some of the ‘antis’ confirmed their worst fears. James Callaghan provoked consternation when he made a churlish speech in Southampton on 25 May, which decried the appetite on the continent for a ‘European Europe’ that would reduce English – the ‘language of Chaucer’ – to subordinate status.<sup>241</sup> Douglas Jay also displayed idiosyncratic opinions towards foreign governments – he was sceptical, for instance, that France, Italy and Germany had the necessary democratic traditions for stable government, which made it easy to insinuate that his dislike of the EEC stemmed from the rather insular, even xenophobic opinions he was suspected of holding in private.<sup>242</sup> Nonetheless, some caution should be applied when assessing the ‘internationalist’ credentials of Labour’s pro-EEC forces. The liberal-imperialist impulses that saturated Britain’s body politic for most of the twentieth century had not, after all, completely disappeared: as Rhiannon Vickers writes, there was still

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<sup>238</sup> *Hansard*, 823, cols. 2022-3, 27 October 1971.

<sup>239</sup> Mackintosh, ‘Socialism or Social Democracy’, p. 473.

<sup>240</sup> Anthony Comerford, ‘Europe and the Realm of the Spirit’, *Socialist Commentary*, October 1971; *Hansard*, 823, col. 2160, 28 October 1971; LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 14 July 1971.

<sup>241</sup> BLPES, Peter Shore papers, 10/63 – ‘James Callaghan on the Common Market’, 25 May 1971, pp. 3-4.

<sup>242</sup> *Times*, 25 April 1968; Kevin Hickson and Jasper Miles, ‘Social Democratic Euroscepticism: Labour’s Neglected Tradition’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 20:4 (2018), p. 870.

a tendency in the party ‘to view Britain as a world leader, not as one of many European countries’.<sup>243</sup> This was a state of affairs that even the Marketeers could not escape completely, and some of them were more than willing to project tropes not of British failure or weakness, as often seemed to be the case when discussing economic prospects, but of strength inside a Community that was susceptible to her hard power.

Thus, Dick Taverne, writing in the LCE publication *Europe Left*, argued that there was ‘no need to fear the Six’, as Britain would become so powerful that it could block any new institutions that the EEC set up and frustrate further alterations to the Rome Treaty – ‘in a word... stop any major steps being taken at all.’<sup>244</sup> Others illustrated a different but equally pervasive form of Anglocentrism, which emphasised – as George Brown had back in 1967 – Britain’s role as the crux of a new international world order. George Lawson summarised this doctrine best when he stated that ‘we had now returned to Europe and had a role to play in ensuring that it did not fall apart’ – a clear allusion to the country’s wartime role.<sup>245</sup> Nairn described this as a ‘nationalism which expresses itself in internationalist language’, but on occasion it shed even that, breaking out into simple old-fashioned nativism.<sup>246</sup> A whiff of this was on display at the special conference, when the long-standing Marketeer Arthur Bottomley recommended British membership because it would restrain West Germany and her apparent ambitions for ‘economic and social control’ of Europe – prompting an anti-EEC delegate to wonder aloud who the ‘internationalists’ really were.<sup>247</sup>

This was a justifiable question, especially when one considers those who embraced social-democratic internationalism without accepting that the EEC was the best organisation to advance it. These ‘antis’ – Reg Prentice, Guy Barnett, Bruce Douglas-Mann and George

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<sup>243</sup> Rhiannon Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World: Volume 2* (Manchester, 2011), p. 99.

<sup>244</sup> LHASC, BEE 1/1/2 – Dick Taverne, ‘No Need for Economic Union with the Six’, *Europe Left*, May 1971.

<sup>245</sup> LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 16 June 1971.

<sup>246</sup> Nairn, ‘The Left Against Europe?’, p. 56.

<sup>247</sup> *Labour and the Common Market*, pp. 18-9, 22, 25.

Cunningham, amongst others – lacked any sense of jingoistic spirit, and did not want Britain to ‘go it alone’ either; what concerned them, as Christopher Cotton observes, were perennial questions of poverty on a global scale.<sup>248</sup> This certainly influenced Douglas-Mann, who maintained that parts of the developing world would be so badly affected by entry as a result of the Community’s prohibitive tariff régime that it would lead to a global widening between rich and poor.<sup>249</sup> It was also true of Barnett, a one-time member of CDS, who reminded the Commons that tariffs would mean the end of trade preferences to Commonwealth countries in particular; this would strike a grievous blow to a relationship that was necessary if Britain was to adjust to being a ‘second-class power’, a possibility which, like the ‘Europeans’ Jenkins and Mackintosh, he felt was not only inevitable but should be actively welcomed.<sup>250</sup> Their example once again gives an indication of how difficult it is to apply simple labels to the groups concerned, and of how suspicions of irrationality from both sides could often obscure the rather more complex realities that lay underneath.

### **The Jenkinsites and the 1975 referendum**

With the charges of ‘élitism’ and ‘betrayal’ still ringing in their ears, in the aftermath of the Commons vote many Marketeers clearly felt pressurised to express their contrition. Roy Mason, writing years later, admitted that he ‘didn’t much enjoy’ breaking a three-line whip for the first time in his parliamentary career.<sup>251</sup> Edmund Dell, despite stepping down from his position on the front-bench immediately after the vote, wrote in his resignation letter that ‘I would not want, in the current difficult situation in the Party, to do anything that makes more

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<sup>248</sup> Cotton, ‘Labour, European Integration and the European Mind’, p. 155.

<sup>249</sup> *Hansard*, 823, cols. 1301-2, 25 October 1971.

<sup>250</sup> *Hansard*, 823, cols. 999-1001, 21 October 1971.

<sup>251</sup> Roy Mason, *Paying the Price* (London, 1999) p. 117.

difficult the re-establishment of unity’, while Phillip Whitehead, speaking at a meeting of the PLP, told his fellow MPs that he had entered the ‘Aye’ lobby ‘in great misery’, and ‘begged his colleagues to unite behind the Party’.<sup>252</sup> From outside parliament a similarly conciliatory approach was being adopted: Giles Radice, a young supporter of Jenkins who was soon to become an MP, wrote in January 1972 that the vote ‘merely reflects a deep divide within the Party on a single issue and is entirely compatible with complete acceptance of the Party whip on all other issues.’<sup>253</sup> Jenkins himself commented in his memoirs that ‘We did not see ourselves as Peelites or Liberal Unionists preparing to move across the political spectrum’.<sup>254</sup>

Whitehead made his conciliatory comments in response to a PLP ‘censure motion’ put forward by the prominent left-winger Ian Mikardo, which demanded loyalty from the Marketeers when the legislation to make accession a reality passed through parliament. It had been designed to enforce an earlier impromptu compromise – dubbed the ‘Houghton formula’ after the chairman of the PLP – which had permitted the rebels to vote in favour of the EEC on condition they would thenceforth obey the party line. But Mikardo’s amendment was easy to interpret as a left-wing witch-hunt, and several anti-EEC social-democrats intervened on the Marketeers’ behalf. On 3 November Bruce Douglas-Mann offered the possibility of a compromise, stating that although he wanted the Marketeers to vote against any subsequent legislation he could not support an amendment that would sow further division. The party, he argued, had to reflect a ‘wide spectrum’ of opinion – ‘the war was over [and] if we attempted to isolate the rebels now it would only destroy the party and destroy our chances of winning the next General Election.’ Similar pronouncements were made by David Weitzman and George Cunningham, both of whom stressed the threat to party unity if the motion was

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<sup>252</sup> WES, Dell, MS.Eng.c.7591 – Letter: Edmund Dell to Harold Wilson, 29 October 1971; LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 3 November 1971.

<sup>253</sup> Giles Radice, ‘The Limits of Populism’, *Socialist Commentary*, January 1972.

<sup>254</sup> Jenkins, *Life at the Centre*, p. 327.

passed.<sup>255</sup> Their interventions indicate that the Marketeers' rebellion, although clearly a serious breach, was not viewed as an insurmountable obstacle by the right-wing 'antis'.

Part of the reason why many of the pro-EEC contingent placed such a strong imperative upon loyalty is that Jenkins had put himself forward for re-election as deputy leader, with the ballot being held just a week after the vote on entry. Having earlier agreed to uphold the terms of the Houghton formula, in the hope that the Labour 'Europeans' could 'make a dash for Europe without endangering our long-term relations with the Labour Party', Jenkins made a statement promoting his candidacy which promised that he would 'always endeavour to vote with the party'.<sup>256</sup> His supporters reportedly hoped that this 'strong loyalist speech' would 'prove to be a clincher', but others were more aware of Jenkins's admission that he would not expect to vote in a way contrary to how he had voted on 28 October, and that he would opt to resign from the position if asked to do so.<sup>257</sup> As well as making him a hostage to fortune, the effect of these caveats was to alienate many who might otherwise have been prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt. In the event, he was elected on the second ballot by an unimpressive 140 votes, with several anti-EEC right-wingers and 'centrists' suspected of abstaining or even casting their final vote for Michael Foot, Jenkins's left-wing opponent.<sup>258</sup>

The ballot for the deputy leadership was the first indication that the Marketeers' position was beginning to slip. Further hints came over the next few months, when the European Communities Bill gradually took shape. Now that he was deputy leader, Jenkins was no longer in a position to oppose the passing of legislation he had conspired to make happen in the first place, and it was instead left to the more uninhibited pro-EEC

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<sup>255</sup> LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 3 November 1971.

<sup>256</sup> Jenkins, *Life at the Centre*, p. 332; LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 4 November 1971.

<sup>257</sup> *Times*, 4 November 1971; *Guardian*, 5 November 1971.

<sup>258</sup> Jenkins, *Life at the Centre*, p. 334; John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life* (London, 2015), p. 383.

backbenchers to employ spoiling tactics to assist the bill through parliament. The key plank of their strategy was to abstain from select divisions in large enough numbers to frustrate the party's opposition, a ruse that earned themselves the epithet 'The Kamikaze Squad'. This aroused the ire of those who saw the makings of a plot, with the anti-EEC journal *Resistance News* suggesting that it was Douglas Houghton himself who was responsible for colluding with Conservative whips to ensure that the legislation got through the House.<sup>259</sup> Many Marketeers denied that anything untoward was going on: Charles Pannell, a working-class Gaitskellite who refrained from abstaining in any divisions himself, deplored the 'rumours going around that the pro-Marketeers were conspiring to keep the Government majority.'<sup>260</sup> What stopped such rumours from gaining ground is that many members of the 'Squad' were elderly backbenchers, not factional followers of Jenkins but traditionally-minded Labour men (and, in some instances, women) who prided themselves on their loyalty to the party. Their naturally tribal reflexes kept any dissent firmly in check, stifling the possibility that they could be used as an advance guard for a faction or breakaway.

Nonetheless, the whiff of disloyalty made the 69 rebels look increasingly suspect. Jenkins, for his part, felt bound by the pledges he had made when running for deputy, and his hand was forced by events that occurred two months later, when the Shadow Cabinet opted to support a rebel Conservative amendment in parliament for a nationwide referendum on EEC membership. Jenkins had been so angered by the decision that he repeatedly threatened to resign – a prospect that alarmed followers such as Phillip Whitehead, who warned in a letter to Jenkins that 'this is the worst of times to become Peelites.' Whitehead begged him to ignore the 'siren voices' of the 'perfidious pro-Europeans' who were encouraging him to resign, a viewpoint that was shared by another (anti-EEC) supporter, Gwynoro Jones, who

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<sup>259</sup> BLPES, CIB, 1/3 – 'Collusion between Labour Marketeers and Conservative Government?', *Resistance News*, January 1973.

<sup>260</sup> LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 29 June 1972.

told Jenkins that the Europeans' predilection for 'ideas and not people' could, if heeded, impede his connection with the 'other spectrum of the Parliamentary Party'.<sup>261</sup> Their fears indicate that even at this stage many Jenkinsites (as their group had now become commonly known – see chapter four) did not want their clique to become so obsessed by the European issue as to fulfil Crosland's grim prediction of becoming a 'party within a party'. But it made little impact on their leader, who was – as Austen Albu reported – in a 'highly emotional state & had come to the end'.<sup>262</sup> On 10 April 1972 Jenkins submitted his resignation, stating that he could not abide that the party's 'official majority position' was now 'opposition as principle' – an act which Bill Rodgers later described as separating 'the European knights from the anti-European bishops of the right and centre'.<sup>263</sup>

Jenkins was not the only revisionist whose support for Europe placed him in a difficult situation. Dick Taverne was another outspoken critic of the contortions Labour's Europeans were required to perform in order to maintain unity, voicing his discomfort by telling the PLP that voting with the party on the Second Reading of the Communities Bill made him feel like he had 'eaten dirt'.<sup>264</sup> Taverne had already been subject to a vote of no-confidence by his left-wing constituency party in Lincoln, and in June 1972 he was formally deselected.<sup>265</sup> The reasoning given by the CLP was that his decision to break a three-line whip could not be tolerated, but Taverne suspected that this was just a proxy for deeper concerns. '[If] someone – like me – combines the two crimes of not being left-wing and being middle class', he complained in the *Observer*, 'then his views are put down entirely to

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<sup>261</sup> WES, Papers of Roy Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 105 – Letters: Phillip Whitehead to Roy Jenkins, 22 February 1972; Gwynoro Jones to Roy Jenkins, 23 February 1972.

<sup>262</sup> CAC, ALBU, 36 – Letter: Austen Albu to 'M', 13 April 1972.

<sup>263</sup> CAC, ALBU, 36 – Letter: Roy Jenkins to Harold Wilson, 10 April 1972; Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals*, pp. 134-5.

<sup>264</sup> LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 24 February 1972.

<sup>265</sup> Dick Taverne, *The Future of the Left: Lincoln and After* (London, 1974), p. 75; WES, Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 101 – 'Appeal by Dick Taverne Against the Decision of the General Management Committee of the Lincoln Labour Party on the 19th June 1972', undated.

his class background.’<sup>266</sup> This is corroborated by the historians John Ramsden and Richard Jay, who remark that the EEC issue ‘accentuated [the] sense of class separation’ in his CLP, not least because Taverne was apparently more willing to consult the views of Lincoln’s industrialists on the matter than listen to the city’s trade unionists.<sup>267</sup> Taverne’s appeal to the NEC was turned down, and although there was an attempt to prevent him from being thrown out of the party he eventually felt compelled to resign from parliament, forcing a by-election in which he stood as a candidate under the ‘Democratic Labour’ banner.

This presented yet another dilemma for the pro-EEC right, one that served to entrench their inner divisions. Having been made a martyr for the cause, Taverne would now be Labour’s main opponent in a highly publicised test of the party’s electoral strength. When approached by the national agent Reg Underhill to help in the by-election, party figures who were well-disposed towards Taverne were faced with the prospect of having to actively campaign against their erstwhile CDS colleague and for a candidate (John Dilks) whose left-wing politics were at some remove from theirs.<sup>268</sup> Crosland was one who agreed to do so, prompting Gaitskell’s biographer Philip Williams to berate him for ‘lending respectability’ to Labour’s campaign, but many other pro-EEC Labourites simply refused to show their faces: Lord George-Brown, for instance, was asked by both the party and Taverne’s campaign team to join them, and although his sympathies lay with the latter he decided to remain aloof on the grounds that it was ‘not worth taking any risk’ (despite admitting to ‘feeling rather ashamed’ at this obvious excuse).<sup>269</sup> In the event, Taverne won handsomely with 58 per cent of the vote, but his triumph was not without cost. During the campaign, he had entertained the

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<sup>266</sup> *Observer*, 11 March 1973.

<sup>267</sup> John Ramsden and Richard Jay, ‘Lincoln: The Background to Taverne’s Triumph’, in Chris Cook and John Ramsden (eds), *By-Elections in British Politics* (New York, 1973), pp. 273-4.

<sup>268</sup> WES, Brown, MS.Eng.c.5059 – Letter: Reg Underhill to Lord George-Brown, 8 February 1973.

<sup>269</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 12/4 – Letter: Philip Williams to Anthony Crosland, 6 February 1973; WES, Brown, MS.Eng.c.5059 – Letter: Lord George-Brown to Mervyn Stockwood, 12 February 1973; ‘Message for Dick Taverne at Lincoln’, 21 February 1973.

possibility that his victory would be the ‘catalyst’ for the formation of a ‘new, centrist Social Democratic-style grouping’, a notion that was enthusiastically supported by certain journalists, most notably Bernard Levin of the *Times*.<sup>270</sup> His victory now provided disaffected social-democrats with a successful precedent should they consider leaving the party.

By 1974, the prospect of a *post-hoc* referendum on EEC membership had become reality: renegotiation of the terms of entry was included as one of Labour’s manifesto pledges, and following its return to government in February there was a flurry of activity as both sides of the debate adjusted to new realities. Some pro-EEC diehards, such as John Mackintosh, still cleaved to the idea that the referendum was a violation of parliamentary democracy and thus a much graver threat to sovereignty than EEC membership, but for the committed ‘antis’ it gave them an exciting opportunity to inform the public of their case.<sup>271</sup> The CMSC, which featured several social-democratic anti-Marketeters on its executive committee during this period, soon launched a putative campaign that reflected Douglas Jay’s eternal preoccupations – food prices, the burden on the balance of payments, the protectionism of the CAP, and the need for a loose industrial free-trade agreement along the lines of EFTA – juxtaposed with splashes of tabloid-style populism.<sup>272</sup> Jay himself continued to insist that the ‘facts’ were on their side: ‘rational argument’, he said in July 1972, ‘can defeat all the mass propoganda of press, T.V. and hired professionals’.<sup>273</sup> This last point indicates that anti-élitism was still never far away from the anti-Marketeters’ minds: Robert Saunders, in his summary of the referendum, pointed out that their campaigns actively cultivated the image of plucky underdogs fighting against the establishment.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Ramsden and Jay, ‘Lincoln’, p. 293; *Times*, 15 February 1973.

<sup>271</sup> John P. Mackintosh, ‘The Case Against a Referendum’, *Political Quarterly*, 46:1 (1975), pp. 73-82.

<sup>272</sup> BLPES, CIB, 1/3 – ‘Why Food is Dear’, *Resistance News*, June 1973; ‘Douglas Jay’s Copenhagen Speech’, *Resistance News*, June 1974.

<sup>273</sup> BLPES, Shore, 9/128 – Circular letter from Douglas Jay, 25 July 1972

<sup>274</sup> Robert Saunders, *Yes to Europe! The 1975 Referendum and Seventies Britain* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 143-4.

The LCE, on the other hand, used the pre-referendum phoney war to launch a strategy that involved confronting the electorate with the economic disaster that awaited should they choose to leave, highlighting the numbers of jobs that depended on trade with the other EEC nations now that Britain was safely embedded inside the Community. But arguably their most effective gambit was to promote the perception that the split was a tussle between their sensible ‘realist’ moderation and the irresponsible extremism of senior anti-EEC figures such as Enoch Powell and Tony Benn. As Harold Macmillan was to wryly observe during the campaign, ‘the Communists, the semi-communists and the fellow travellers are all anti-Europe. It is the moderates, followers of Mr Jenkins, who are for it.’<sup>275</sup> Despite the fact that many of these ‘moderates’ had opposed the referendum, once it was launched in 1975 they found themselves revelling in the camaraderie of a well-run, well-financed campaign that brought together people of similar worldviews from different parties. Jenkins, writing in his journal, considered that ‘one of the most significant lessons of the campaign’ was that their moderation had won respect from the public, whereas ‘most’ of the anti-EEC spokesmen aroused a ‘certain feeling of unease and even mistrust’.<sup>276</sup> He and other Labour Marketeers took these lessons to heart, remembering how well they had worked with Tories and Liberals while often looking askance at those ‘antis’ who were in the same party as them.

This emphasis on ‘moderation’ was always likely to prove a trump card for most social-democrats, especially as they no longer had to abide by the exigencies of opposing the ‘Tory terms’ of four years earlier. Thus, it was no surprise that a number of previously hostile or agnostic figures soon declared themselves amenable to membership: the *Guardian* reported that there were 14 formerly anti-EEC MPs who were now sponsoring the LCE’s ‘Britain in Europe’ campaign.<sup>277</sup> One was Reg Prentice, for reasons largely related to his

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<sup>275</sup> *Times*, 7 April 1975.

<sup>276</sup> WES, Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 53 – Roy Jenkins’s dictated journals, 1975, p. 31.

<sup>277</sup> *Guardian*, 8 April 1975.

efforts to unify the right (see chapter five). Prentice was particularly keen to uphold the idea that the European question was an existential battle between progressive and reactionary forces, in the hope that such a schema would ostracise his enemies on the left; the referendum, he said, was not just a contest between ‘the moderates and the extremists’, but also between ‘the realists and the escapists’ and the ‘internationalists and isolationists’.<sup>278</sup> Brian Walden, meanwhile, had – as a member of the LCE in the late 1960s – always been an unlikely anti-Marketeeer, and by the 1975 he had (rather pragmatically) returned to his previous viewpoint, informing the *Guardian* in May that although he had ‘went along with the Labour Party’ in 1971, now that Britain was a member the issue was no longer up for debate.<sup>279</sup> This tepid, ‘realist’ stance was repeated by a still-ambivalent but considerably more resolute Anthony Crosland, who declared that the electorate was now being asked to come out rather than go in; to return to the *status quo ante* would precipitate a lurch back to extreme reactionary politics, a ‘poor man’s inchoate chauvinism’ predicated on imperialist nostalgia.<sup>280</sup>

Naturally, all right-wing anti-Marketeeers would have recognised how dangerous it was to be associated with political extremism. But some still bridled at its implications, which in turn had an impact on their existing loyalties. The economics journalist Peter Jay was one who queried whether the framing of the referendum as a battle between moderates and extremists was appropriate. Jay considered himself to be a Gaitskellite (Gaitskell was, he said, ‘always my supreme political hero’), but despite this he had already spent some time – as we shall discover in chapters three and four – trying to synthesise his otherwise standard revisionist mentality with more unorthodox views as to how politics should develop in the

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<sup>278</sup> BLPES, Reg Prentice papers, 2/7 – Press release, 27 May 1975.

<sup>279</sup> *Guardian*, 13 May 1975.

<sup>280</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 13/33 – Labour Campaign for Britain in Europe press release, 3 June 1975; *Guardian*, 8 April 1975.

future.<sup>281</sup> His refusal to work inside the conventional schema of ‘left vs. right’, as he referred to it in his autobiography, left him aghast at the manner in which the Europeans were trying to delegitimise their opponents – including people like him – by presenting them as somehow beyond the pale. Jay protested that the ‘one-eyed’ liberal press commentariat (epitomised in his opinion by the *Guardian* columnist Peter Jenkins) had tried to force complex issues such as Europe into a narrow ‘conceptual framework’, presenting their ‘Europhilia’ as evidence of a ‘‘moderate’ centre-right or centre-left and sound’ sensibility which commanded ‘a monopoly of all political virtue’. Their assumptions were, he insisted, wrong: the European question ‘had no logical location in this one-dimensional space’.<sup>282</sup> It is little wonder that he admitted to feeling closer sympathy to those working on the margins of politics than to his fellow social-democrats.

In pondering this situation, it may well be that Jay had his own father in mind. The rich vein of populism channelled by Douglas Jay during the earlier debates had prised him away from his original technocratic moorings; as Philip Williams later remarked, the one-time ‘planners’ spokesman’ was by the 1970s ‘emerging as the people’s champion against the technocrats’.<sup>283</sup> Such a dramatic change in outlook left Jay isolated from the PLP right. Immediately after the Commons vote on entry in 1971, he was nominated for a place in the Shadow Cabinet on the soft-left ‘Tribune’ slate, and once the referendum campaign was underway he found ‘great joy’ in working with fellow anti-Market fundamentalists such as Eric Heffer, likening it to ‘being back in the fifties with Gaitskell’.<sup>284</sup> He stood apart from the right’s attempts to organise itself, declining to join the Manifesto Group when it was formed in 1974 and maintaining the distinction of being virtually the only ‘moderate’ MP not to sign

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<sup>281</sup> Peter Jay, *An Unfinished Life* (2017), p. 130.

<sup>282</sup> Jay, *An Unfinished Life*, pp. 211-2.

<sup>283</sup> P.M. Williams, ‘Political memoir of an anti-marketeer’, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 25 July 1980.

<sup>284</sup> *Times*, 24 November 1971; Jay, *Change and Fortune*, p. 465.

the PLP's letter supporting Reg Prentice in his struggle to avoid deselection (see chapter five).<sup>285</sup> A few other backbenchers also pivoted in a similar direction: both Guy Barnett and Eric Deakins – two figures loudly opposed to membership – underwent an even more radical transformation, shifting away from their erstwhile Gaitskellism towards a stance that was more straightforwardly Tribunitic in character.<sup>286</sup> Their gravitation towards the left was in many respects a mirror image of the convergence towards unity experienced by the 'Europeans', and it too had permanent consequences for their political outlook.

Given the balance of forces, however, it was no surprise that social-democratic 'antis' opted to keep their heads down. Unlike 1971, few made any significant public appearances as the referendum approached: both William Ross and Eric Varley, the two moderates in the Cabinet opposing entry, were virtually invisible during the campaign (in contrast to the energetic contributions of their left-wing cabinet colleagues).<sup>287</sup> Nonetheless, and despite the handicap of having to swim against the tide, when the Commons voted on the re-negotiated terms on 9 April 1975 some 30 to 40 MPs from the right (of 144 in total) still came out in support of withdrawal.<sup>288</sup> This group included a majority of those on the right who had spoken against entry in the 1971 Commons debates, such as Douglas Jay, English, Douglas-Mann, Cocks, Hardy, Cunningham and Gilbert; a smattering of working-class backwoodsmen, most notably Tom Urwin and Michael O'Halloran; and two young backbenchers, Ken Weetch and John Watkinson, who had first been elected in October 1974 and were the only anti-EEC social-democrats in what was predominantly a left-wing intake. Although their efforts ultimately counted for naught – the Commons vote was defeated by a

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<sup>285</sup> BLPES, Neville Sandelson papers, 4/8 – List of Manifesto Group members, 19 March 1975; BLPES, Prentice, 2/6 – Press release with list of MPs, 16 July 1975.

<sup>286</sup> LHASC, Dianne Hayter papers – 'List of MPs, October 1974', undated; Timothy Heppell, Andrew Nicholls and Robert Crines, 'Ideological Alignments within the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Leadership Election of 1976', *British Politics* 5:1 (2010), pp. 76-7.

<sup>287</sup> Uwe Kitzinger and David Butler, *The 1975 Referendum* (London, 1976), p. 114.

<sup>288</sup> *Hansard*, 889, cols. 1366-71, 9 April 1975; LHASC, Hayter – 'List of MPs, October 1974'.

majority of more than two to one, a ratio that was repeated in the referendum vote itself in June – many of them still felt passionate about their cause: Jay, for one, asserted that, had the ‘No’ vote won, ‘it would have been the greatest triumph for genuine popular democracy, for the common people over the rich and selfish, in modern British history.’<sup>289</sup>

## Conclusion

After the referendum was over much of the heat was taken out of the European issue, becoming once again a matter for individual conscience. One coda emerged later, when certain anti-Marketeters militated against the European Commission’s plan to introduce direct elections to the parliament in Strasbourg, at the same time as David Owen – ironically, one of the 69 rebels – was coming under fire during his tenure as Foreign Secretary for his ‘Gaullist’ strategy of amplifying the concessions he had wrung out of the European Commission while attacking the ‘Euro-rhetoric’ of those who supported further integration.<sup>290</sup> Owen’s antagonistic conduct indicates how much potential the issue had for unleashing raw, divisive feelings. In the case of the Labour right, there were two main ethics that had caused much of the anguish. The first related to equality, which manifested itself in pejorative fashion as a division between ‘populists’ and ‘élitists’. The former argued that the opinions of the working-class – which they understood to be as opposed to the EEC as theirs were – had been ignored in the rush to membership, and that the issue could only be redressed by means of a national referendum, which would restore authority to the people rather than parliament. Their opponents naturally did not see themselves as ‘élitists’, arguing that their egalitarian

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<sup>289</sup> Jay, *Change and Fortune*, p. 487.

<sup>290</sup> *Financial Times*, 8 February 1978; Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool (SJL), David Owen papers, D709/2/9/3 – Speech at the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire European CLP, Beeston, 5 June 1979.

*bona fides* were just as great as those of their opponents; social justice, they argued, could however only be advanced by entrusting important decisions to well-informed representatives who acted on principle. The second ethic was rationality, which was central to the revisionist worldview and left both sides accusing the other of lacking it. The visionary rhetoric of the Marketeers annoyed the ‘antis’ in particular, while the ‘pros’ in turn saw the anti-Market defence of British sovereignty as evidence of their narrow-minded, chauvinistic attitudes.

By dividing the right in this manner, the European controversy thus proved to be a trigger for fragmentation later on in the decade, as it prompted a number of right-wingers to reappraise their assumptions regarding the party. And yet the resulting schism never amounted to a simple bifurcation along revisionist and traditionalist lines, with right-wingers of all persuasions and tendencies getting involved in both sides of the argument. Nor did it lead to instant thoughts of secession among the Marketeers: many of them were traditional-minded loyalists who did not wish to harm Labour, and even the revisionists close to Jenkins protested their continuing attachment to the movement. Equally, some of their keenest anti-Market critics – most notably Douglas Jay and Stephen Haseler – were considered to be revisionists, while Anthony Crosland, who actually supported EEC membership, was so concerned about maintaining the party’s unity that he spent more time attacking his own side for their disloyalty than he did criticising the anti-Marketeers. As an indication of how Crosland and Haseler were influenced by recent memory, they both pointed to Gaitskell’s own anti-élitism in support of their position.

Even after Britain had entered the EEC, the repercussions from the *contretemps* in 1971 continued to destabilise the beleaguered forces of the right for the remainder of the decade. Jenkins’s supporters were made to feel unwelcome in a party that still regarded them as traitors for voting with a Conservative Government, while the impact of their leader’s resignation from the deputy leadership and the controversy surrounding Dick Taverne’s

deselection (and subsequent re-election campaign) served to only to distance them further from the mainstream of the movement. As for the dwindling numbers of right-wing 'antis', their position largely inoculated them from Jenkinsite 'disloyalty', but some of the truly fervent amongst them – most notably Jay – inched away from their previous revisionism, coming to associate more with left-wing activists in Labour's anti-EEC grouping and less with their fellow moderates. These centrifugal forces arguably harmed the unity of the right overall, pulling it further apart and leaving those in the centre weakened.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Trade Unions and the Labour right

#### Introduction

In the 1950s – the last decade in which Labour had previously experienced serious acrimony between its left and right wings – most trade unions were bastions of moderation, and a bloc of leaders led by Arthur Deakin, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) maintained close relations with the Gaitskellite establishment. Steven Fielding has attributed this hegemony to the ability of the 'Fabian-social democratic leadership' to persuade the unions that their common enemy was the cadres of the left, whose industrial organisation made them more formidable on the factory shopfloor than they were ever likely to be in parliament.<sup>291</sup> But the Gaitskell era was to be the apogee for this emollient brand of sympathetic unionism. From the 1960s onwards a less compromising assertiveness took hold, as a new generation of overtly left-wing leaders – embodied by the new general secretary of the General and Municipal Workers' Union (GMWU), Frank Cousins, who had succeeded Deakin in 1956 – sought to have a greater influence over Labour's policies.<sup>292</sup> This ensured that the right wing was now on the back foot, as it was no longer able to maintain the control that it had previously exerted over large sections of the movement. Although mitigated by the subsequent campaign to reverse it, the avowal of the 1960 Scarborough

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<sup>291</sup> Fielding, 'Labourism' and Locating the British Labour Party', p. 6.

<sup>292</sup> Until 1974, the GMWU was known as the National Union of General and Municipal Workers.

conference in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament was an early example of the threat posed to the revisionists when trade union support was not forthcoming.

Industrial unrest inevitably followed, as the new atmosphere of militancy was experienced amidst a backdrop of worsening economic conditions. One of the features of this unrest was the spiralling of wages in the industrial sector, as higher price inflation fuelled competing pay claims from rival unions. When the new Labour Government was elected in 1964 it understood that some arrangement had to be enforced if wage inflation was to be kept down. However, this encroached on what was regarded as the chief function of the unions, understandably dividing the right: many MPs possessed union sponsorship and had once worked in heavy industry, and thus understood policy through an explicitly Labourist prism. But there was an alternative view that considered an incomes policy necessary for economic stability, and which viewed the prerogatives of the unions as an obstruction to this end. At the crux of the matter was how industrial politics cohered with Labour values: was the purpose of the party to assist the unions in pursuing better pay rates for the working class (that it had, after all, been founded to represent), or was it to govern in the interests of all, without any favour being given to sectional demands? Previously, challenges to Labourism had come from the left, which objected to the unions' gradualism and materialism. Now, for the first time, it threatened to come from the social-democratic right instead.

The focus of this chapter is to examine the key industrial developments that led to an increase in tension among sections of the Labour right. The first section analyses the controversy surrounding the Wilson Government's attempts to introduce proposals controlling wage bargaining efforts and other union activities through statutory legislation, and the reaction of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and leading unionists. It then goes on to analyse the impact of the social contract – a voluntary policy that was intended to achieve co-operation rather than conflict with the rest of the labour movement. Another

preoccupation that emerged at this time was industrial democracy, which derived from alternative trade union principles – namely, that the traditional conflict between capital and labour could be transcended if efforts were made to bring unionised employees onto company boards. The final section, meanwhile, considers what consequences these ructions had for the institutional link that existed between the party and the wider movement, and the diverging responses to Labourism as a feature of the party's identity.

### ***In Place of Strife and Prices-Incomes Policy***

One of the principal roles of the trade unions is to bargain for wages on behalf of their members, which it does free of intervention from government. As all unions bargain independently of each other, there is no central authority which can co-ordinate outcomes. This can lead to a damaging cycle of inflationary demands, as unions respond to the inflation caused by earlier rounds of bargaining by seeking to raise pay settlements still further. Nevertheless, the notion that some kind of government controls were needed over wage and prices increases was not common in revisionist circles during the early post-war years. In *The Future of Socialism*, for example, Anthony Crosland maintained that, in times of excess demand, not only would the unions' bargaining position be strengthened, but any adverse consequences would not be alleviated by price controls, which outside of a short-term emergency were of little import. He argued that unions must not become closely involved with the prerogatives of government when it came to curbing inflation. 'To put this responsibility on the Unions', he said,

is to reverse, or to attempt to reverse, their entire traditional function: to convert

them from wage-bargaining organisations mainly concerned to advance the interests of the workers, and on this basis enjoying the loyalty of their members, into organisations primarily concerned with national economic policy.

Any movement in this direction, he claimed, would eat away at the unions' solidarity, which would then drive workers into the arms of the Communist Party.<sup>293</sup> For such a self-consciously radical politician, this was a somewhat conventional line to take: rather than entertain the possibility of a new phase of development for the unions, one that would incorporate them into a potentially more harmonious system of industrial relations, Crosland clearly preferred to uphold existing assumptions about their role in society.

Viewpoints like these were rarely challenged within the party – even by other revisionist thinkers – while it remained in opposition during the 1950s and early 1960s, and when the Wilson administration was ushered into office it was left to a very 'traditional' right-winger to bring ideas concerning deflationary wage restraint into vogue. Coming as he did from a union background, George Brown already had a close understanding of labour practices, endowing him with a sympathetic but nuanced attitude towards industrial reform. Prior to the 1964 election Brown had been an advocate for a new government department that could deal with economic matters outside of the Treasury's influence. When the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) was formally inaugurated (with Brown installed as its first cabinet minister) it aimed to coordinate a strategy that would keep incomes in accordance with productivity increases while holding down prices. A 'Joint Statement of Intent on Productivity, Prices and Incomes' was soon published, which recommended that institutional machinery should be created to review price movements and assess whether or not the behaviour of prices and incomes was in the 'national interest'. That machinery eventually

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<sup>293</sup> Crosland, *Future of Socialism*, p. 451.

became the National Board of Prices and Incomes (NBPI): set up in 1965 with the former Conservative MP Aubrey Jones at its head, it was the first plank in the DEA's 'national plan' to tackle the structural defects that had beleaguered the British economy.

Although sceptical himself of the need for statutory control – preferring currency devaluation as a tool for keeping inflation down and regaining international competitiveness – Brown was determined to carry through the line being advocated by the Government, which had edged away from voluntary cooperation and towards a system of legislation that would regulate prices and incomes. The NBPI was given the remit to undertake such reviews and consultations, but, as Peter Dorey notes, it had no statutory authority to enforce its recommendations, relying only on the 'voluntary acquiescence and goodwill' of management and organised labour.<sup>294</sup> Thus, in 1966 Brown announced a prices and incomes bill which, although still paying lip service to the idea of voluntary wage restraint at least, placed the NBPI on a statutory footing and introduced an 'early-warning system' that would notify the Government of any forthcoming pay arrangements. These measures were relatively uncontroversial, but also included was a commitment to 'freeze' prices and wages for a period of six months, to be followed by a further half-year of 'severe restraint' in the hopes of keeping inflation down. The response from organised labour to the bill was therefore unsurprisingly tepid, and although supported by union leaders<sup>295</sup> when the vote was put to Congress it only passed by a majority of 300,000 votes (out of a total of nearly nine million). Brown maintained that 'We were never out to limit incomes just for the sake of limiting them', but from the unions' perspective that seemed to be the Government's sole motivation; as James Cronin has pointed out, Brown asked union leaders to suppress wage increases

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<sup>294</sup> Peter Dorey, 'From a Policy for Incomes to Incomes Policies', in Peter Dorey (ed.), *The Labour Governments 1964-1970* (London, 2006), p. 76.

<sup>295</sup> Brown, *In My Way*, p. 107.

without giving them any inducements with which to entice their members to support the policy.<sup>296</sup>

The unintended consequences of the freeze can be understood more clearly by gauging the reaction from the Electricians' Trade Union (ETU), a union that had emerged as one of the leading voices in support of the moderate, technocratic vision espoused during Wilson's first year in charge. Having only recently wrested the union free from the grip of its previous corrupt, Communist-backed leadership, the group of reformers who now stood at its helm were keen to advertise their reformist credentials. Leslie Cannon, the General President of the ETU, had endorsed an incomes policy at the 1964 TUC Congress, declaring that his union had 'placed its trust' in the new Labour Government to successfully achieve it, and over the next few years he conscientiously promoted the view that trade unionists must be prepared to change their ways.<sup>297</sup> But it was his own union that ironically became one of the biggest early obstacles to the Government's ambitions. When the wage freeze was announced the ETU had just negotiated a pay deal on behalf of its members in the electrical contracting industry, which promised a 33 per cent increase in wages over three years in exchange for productivity-related improvements in working practices.<sup>298</sup> The union's General Secretary, Frank Chapple, was furious to find the deal threatened by the freeze, and at a meeting with Brown he refused to modify the agreement even if prompted by the NPBI; his displeasure was similarly felt by the union's Executive Council, who opposed the TUC's acceptance of the freeze by a vote of six to five.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Brown, *In My Way*, p. 104; James Cronin, *Labour and Society in Britain, 1918-1979* (London, 1984), pp. 186-8.

<sup>297</sup> Modern Records Centre (MRC), Warwick University, ETU/EETPU papers (ETU), MSS.137/212 – TUC Congress reports, Economic Planning and Wages (1964), p. 448; MSS.137/222 – Article from *The Director*, September 1967.

<sup>298</sup> Frank Chapple, *Sparks Fly! A Trade Union Life*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed (London, 1985), p. 111.

<sup>299</sup> MRC, Frank Chapple papers, MSS.387/1/4/18 – Executive Council minutes, no. 132, September 1966; Chapple, *Sparks Fly!*, p. 112.

The refusal of one of the more avowedly revisionist-supporting unions to countenance any interference in its right to secure higher wages indicated that there could be sharp differences in opinion within the Labour movement as to what constituted ‘progress’, which *in extremis* threatened any possibility of a transition from a free collective bargaining model to a managed system supervised by central government. Chapple, ‘still smarting from the run-in with the Government over the contracting deal’, articulated the thoughts of many when he wrote in early 1967 that the ‘hand and word of a friend and partner has been mistaken for the fealty of the vassal and the plea of a suppliant. The credit and goodwill afforded the Labour administration is not limitless’.<sup>300</sup> But such divisions could also be found inside the higher reaches of the parliamentary party. Richard Crossman, in his diaries, suggested that statutory incomes policies were by now favoured in Cabinet by middle-class, modernising ‘socialist intellectuals’ and opposed by a stubborn coalition of the ‘T.U. proletariat’.<sup>301</sup> In the former category he placed Gaitskellites such as Michael Stewart, Patrick Gordon Walker, and Anthony Crosland, but also those left-wingers who cleaved more closely to the thinking emerging from Number 10, most notably Barbara Castle. The latter group, meanwhile, included the lower-ranked trio of Brown, Ray Gunter and Fred Peart, all of whom were from a working-class background (the only trade unionist Crossman identified as supportive of incomes policy was the colonial secretary, Frederick Lee).<sup>302</sup>

The debates surrounding incomes policy took place at the same time as the devaluation of sterling (which saw import prices rise), and the bill provoked continuous dissent from a group of backbench MPs who had already protested at the idea of statutory control when the wage freeze was introduced. At this stage almost all of these ‘voluntarist’ rebels were of the ‘trade union left’: their ringleader during the 1964–6 parliament had been

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<sup>300</sup> John Lloyd, *Light and Liberty: a History of the EETPU* (London, 1990), p. 517; ‘Editorial’, *Electron*, January 1967.

<sup>301</sup> Crossman, *Diaries*, Vol. 2, p. 252.

<sup>302</sup> Crossman, *Diaries*, Vol. 2, pp. 230, 238.

Frank Cousins, who had returned to his original domicile as the leader of the TGWU in 1966 following his short-lived sojourn in parliament. Cousins had led the opposition to most of the Government's initiatives, and in 1967–8 they were joined by the TUC under George Woodcock and the powerful left-wing President of the engineering workers' union AUEW, Hugh Scanlon. Woodcock and Cousins, says Dorey, 'made clear their opposition to any further wage restraint entailing statutory measures', although Woodcock suggested that a future incomes policy could be permitted if the TUC were to administer it.<sup>303</sup> Therefore, as Robert Taylor concludes, by the late 1960s the idea of an incomes policy – whether statutory or otherwise – had become 'discredited in large parts of the trade-union movement'.<sup>304</sup>

With the TUC and the PLP left amplifying their original support for collective bargaining, one final attempt was made to bring incomes policy to the statute books, this time as just one aspect of a much more ambitious project involving the wholesale regulation of trade union activity. The catalyst for change in this direction was the Donovan Commission, which had been established by Brown in 1965 to review the 'outmoded' bargaining system and suggest ways in which it could be improved. When Lord Donovan released his report three years later, he found that no legal framework was necessary to govern industrial relations, not least because some of the Commission's members were sceptical that anything could be done to prevent unofficial industrial action: instead, a voluntary system should be supported with an emphasis on using local bargaining to secure productivity gains, to be lightly administered by a Commission for Industrial Relations (CIR). The report's conclusions were a great disappointment to Barbara Castle, the Secretary of State at the new Ministry for Employment; largely ignoring Donovan, she instead produced a white paper – optimistically entitled *In Place of Strife* – which, as Alastair Reid states, persisted with the

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<sup>303</sup> Dorey, 'From a Policy for Incomes to Incomes Policies', p. 84.

<sup>304</sup> Robert Taylor, 'The Trade Union 'Problem' since 1960', in Ben Pimlott and Chris Cook (eds), *Trade Unions in British Politics* (London, 1982), p. 197.

more ‘interventionist line’ that had arisen since the early days of the DEA, and which included provisions for enforceable strike ballots and compulsory arbitration to resolve disputes.<sup>305</sup>

The inclusion of legal sanctions in the paper was an unappealing prospect for the unions, and many in the party similarly regarded them with suspicion. This time the modernisers’ *bête noire* was James Callaghan, who had attempted to engineer a compromise solution to the impasse within Cabinet in February 1967, but who now emerged as the leading sceptic on the right of the PLP. Callaghan had been employed as an Inland Revenue Staff Federation official before the war, and claimed to have felt ‘a natural affiliation between my work as a trade union officer and my political convictions.’<sup>306</sup> His understanding that the unions formed the ballast of the movement never left him, and when the Donovan report was published he recalled that its predilection for voluntary co-operation and rejection of statutory intervention was ‘very much in line with my own thinking’, citing the ‘iniquity’ of the Taff Vale Railway Judgement in 1902 as the kernel of his belief that the ‘courts should be kept out of our affairs.’<sup>307</sup> Callaghan’s hostility was shared by another doyen of the Labour right, the PLP chair Douglas Houghton, who opposed the penal clauses in the bill and believed that it was ‘in danger of destroying the Labour Movement’, and also to a lesser degree by Tony Crosland, who was worried about the timing of the bill and the ineffectiveness of legal sanctions.<sup>308</sup> Richard Crossman alleged that it was this triumvirate that really threatened the Government’s security, noting that in the space of six months Crosland had ‘switched from demanding stronger anti-trade union measures to being 100 per cent pro-Callaghan.’<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Robert Taylor, *The Trade Union Question in British Politics* (Oxford, 1993), p. 157; Alastair J. Reid, ‘Labour and the Trade Unions’, in Duncan Tanner, Pat Thane and Nick Tiratsoo (eds), *Labour’s First Century* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 232.

<sup>306</sup> James Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (London, 1987), p. 45.

<sup>307</sup> Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, p. 273.

<sup>308</sup> Peter Jenkins, *The Battle of Downing Street* (London, 1970), p. 112.

<sup>309</sup> Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister, Volume Three, 1968-70* (London, 1977), p. 535.

Once Castle's white paper was distributed for consideration Callaghan quickly manoeuvred against it: as Robert Taylor has noted, he expressed his 'immediate hostility' to the proposals in Cabinet, arguing that the unions should be 'put on their honour' to reform their own procedures.<sup>310</sup> Castle took pains to exclude him from any meetings that discussed the bill, and in return Callaghan cast his vote against what was by now Cabinet policy on 26 March. Such a blow imperilled not just Castle but the Prime Minister, who was by now the subject of various plots to dethrone him – the most serious of which came from the supporters of Roy Jenkins, whose backing of the white paper put them in a difficult position. On 7 May 1969 Houghton used his position as the chairman of the PLP to denounce the white paper, remarking that 'No good that any contentious Bill of this kind can do to industrial relations or the economy will redeem the harm we can do our Government by the disintegration or defeat of the Labour Party.'<sup>311</sup> Although remaining careful to sound loyal, his refusal to countenance any further attempts to push the bill over the line was met with widespread support; one MP even lauded 'stone age socialism' (an epithet given by the bill's reformist supporters to their opponents) as the principles that 'had brought us to power'.<sup>312</sup>

As with Callaghan, the justification of those traditionalist MPs who opposed reform was rooted in the past, but rather than striking them as 'conservative' their reasoning developed instead from one perfectly logical principle: namely, that collective bargaining represented the strength of the working class against the forces of capital. Patrick Seyd, writing in 1976, summed up this view in simple language when he argued that 'in an unequal society, in which the sacrifice on the part of the rich is rare, labour power is one of the few resources which needs maintaining.'<sup>313</sup> This was central to the Labourist idea of freedom,

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<sup>310</sup> Taylor, *Trade Union Question*, p. 162.

<sup>311</sup> Jenkins, *Battle for Downing Street*, p. 119.

<sup>312</sup> LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 7 May 1969.

<sup>313</sup> Patrick Seyd, 'Book Review: 'The Death of British Democracy'', *Political Quarterly*, 47:4 (1976), p. 494.

which was collective rather than individual in spirit: if unions could not bargain for pay on behalf of their members, then what rights did they really have? It is the all-encompassing spirit engendered by such feelings of solidarity that often explains behaviour which appears to outsiders as deeply irrational, not least in the adherence to traditions that seem to have little relevance to the present. It can, however, engender strong feelings, and in the PLP the massed ranks of opposition ensured that the bill was dead even before arrival. No compromise with the TUC was now possible, and later that year the proposals were dropped amid a series of strikes that lasted until 1970.

The disappointment felt by the white paper's supporters after it had failed indicates how baffled they were by this stance: the industrial relations expert Allan Flanders, formerly the principal advisor to the Donovan Commission and a member of the CIR that Castle had set up on the Commission's recommendations, condemned the unions in a *Socialist Commentary* editorial for their 'blind irrationality' and 'extreme conservatism' after they helped consign the white paper to the ashes.<sup>314</sup> Conservatism and irrationality were seen in this instance as one and the same; both denied the necessity of planned interventions to help secure progress for the future, by remaining attached to the ways and practices of the past. Naturally, as avatars of progress, supporters of the policy within the party leadership remained unbowed: Castle in particular continued to press her case, arguing in September 1969 for a 'new phase' in policy that would reintroduce a standstill freeze for three months, with legal penalties for those who broke it.<sup>315</sup> As an indication of just how committed she was to the policy, she described incomes policy as 'leading to the heart of a socialist society' – not the kind of piecemeal reform that had previously been pursued by governments, which in her

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<sup>314</sup> Allan Flanders, 'Let's Keep Our Heads', *Socialist Commentary*, May 1969.

<sup>315</sup> National Archives (NA), Cabinet Office Papers (CAB) – 'Cabinet: Industrial Policy', 23 September 1969.

opinion had lowered wages, but a systematic attempt to harmonise industrial relations for good.<sup>316</sup>

While Castle's doughty rhetoric was what one would expect from a passionate Bevanite, her ideas were reiterated by the Labour revisionist right, most of whom had become convinced of the need for incomes policy as a matter of urgency. The journalist John Torode, who was close to many revisionists, described the Wilson Government's record as a 'faltering step away from the jungle...on the road to socialism', describing incomes policy as a 'radical' concept.<sup>317</sup> An even more emphatic endorsement came from John Mackintosh, whose formula for justifying incomes policies was simple: '[One] of the fundamental purposes of the Labour Party is to reduce inequality. Yet there is irrefutable evidence that to permit free collective bargaining and to encourage inflationary wage demands runs directly counter to this basic objective. Thus a socialist party without an incomes policy is a contradiction in terms.' Mackintosh also saw an incomes policy as necessary for reducing wage differentials between workers, which collective bargaining helped to perpetuate and which belied the notion that 'labour' was one unified entity with the same common interests. He was even willing to praise Castle, not a natural ally by any means, by recognising that 'her whole approach was to judge the results of social actions according to her political principles' and not out of opportunism or dogmatic Labourist tribalism.<sup>318</sup>

This, then, was the key justification for government regulation of prices and incomes, from both the right and left – that it was an egalitarian, ideologically sound safeguard against the market forces unleashed by the spiralling of wages and prices, which could rationally arbitrate against competing interests on the basis of social-democratic ethics rather than by favouring one sectional group. But even if the unions' lack of moderation and selflessness,

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<sup>316</sup> Barbara Castle, 'A Socialist Incomes Policy', *New Statesman*, 25 September 1970.

<sup>317</sup> John Torode, 'An Incomes Policy Worthy of the Name', *Socialist Commentary*, February 1972.

<sup>318</sup> Mackintosh, 'Socialism or Social Democracy?', pp. 475, 477.

argues Jeremy Nuttall, led revisionists to call into question ‘whether the labour movement itself possessed the qualities of character that would supposedly characterise a socialist society’, such criticism – valid though it may have been – still did not solve the problem of how unions could be persuaded to surrender the one privilege that most assured their members’ living standards.<sup>319</sup> Those who had done the most to further thinking on this matter were a team of academics and researchers on industrial policy from outside parliament, sympathetic to Labour revisionism and known collectively as the ‘Nuffield Group’. One of the Group’s key figures was Flanders, who was able to provide a more theoretical and philosophically coherent approach to incomes policy, imbuing his scholarship with a strong commitment to gradualist ethical socialism – as explained in chapter one – and presenting his arguments for incomes policies in terms of their relationship to the public good.<sup>320</sup>

Writing in the aftermath of the 1970–74 Conservative Government’s Industrial Relations Act (see below), Flanders maintained that it was unwise to view the issue of incomes policy as a contest between the respective merits of voluntary or statutory legislation. Instead, he framed the choice as one between either a ‘tripartite-negotiated model’ or a ‘government proclaimed’ one. He saw the latter as consisting of the Government ‘doing its economic arithmetic and produc[ing] a formula’ that would set a limit to pay increases in order to reduce inflation. Unions or employers would be consulted only once a draft was produced, which would lead inevitably to a lack of commitment on their part; both sides would, he claimed, twist any agreement ‘as much as they could take advantage.’<sup>321</sup> If, however, governments chose a pluralist system that respected the differences between the three groups, then they would ‘set out from totally different premises.’ Rather than dictating matters from above and presenting them as a *fait accompli*, ministers could involve both

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<sup>319</sup> Nuttall, ‘Labour Revisionism and Qualities of Mind’, p. 690.

<sup>320</sup> John Kelly, *Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions: Allan Flanders and British Industrial Relations Reform* (London, 2010), p. 120.

<sup>321</sup> Allan Flanders, ‘Two Kinds of Incomes Policy’, *Socialist Commentary*, April 1972.

unions and employers' organisations from the beginning, which Flanders claimed would 'take incomes policy for what it must be in a democracy: a political exercise in compromise among the conflicting interests of three main parties – government, employers and unions.'<sup>322</sup>

More importantly, Flanders also believed that such the tripartite model could benefit social-democracy as a whole, if it demonstrated to sceptics that the unions, too, could play a constructive role in civic life (rather surprisingly, he cited the much-maligned 1966 wage freeze, which he considered to be one of the high points of cooperation between government and unions over the last three decades, as an example of this). 'There is more to trade unionism', he wrote in his 1972 article, 'than grabbing all you can get.'

Throughout their history unions have served their members in other ways than simply bargaining for more pay. They have wanted the same rates of pay for the weak as well as the strong; they have shown a concern for justice and solidarity... this is relevant to the appeal which incomes policy would have to trade unionists, particularly for those who believe in unionism as a cause, provided they are convinced that the policy furthers these traditional union objectives, as it could be made to do.<sup>323</sup>

Flanders' approach had more in common with the appeals to unity and loyalty made by Tony Crosland from the beginning of the 1970s – which, as Lewis Minkin suggests, 'sought to preserve socialist values and Labour's special link with the organised working class but reorder priorities and reaffirm distinctive institutional responsibilities' – than the critical agenda of the group around Roy Jenkins, who were much more concerned by the extent of the unions' assertive power (see also chapter four).<sup>324</sup> But in balancing the two out, it was

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<sup>322</sup> Flanders, 'Two Kinds of Incomes Policy'.

<sup>323</sup> Flanders, 'Two Kinds of Incomes Policy'.

<sup>324</sup> Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance: Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 1991), p. 209.

clear that a voluntarist model would inspire much more goodwill amongst the movement at large; even Callaghan, who militated against ‘self-appointed unofficial leaders who try to usurp the functions of union officials’, nevertheless called on the unions to take ‘a fresh, unprejudiced look at voluntary incomes policy.’<sup>325</sup> Such assent gave its proponents an opportunity that those who championed statutory control were not going to get.

### **From Opposition to Government: the arrival of the social contract.**

When the Conservative Party assumed control of government in 1970 one of its key objectives was to finish what a chastened Labour Party had been forced to abandon. A consultative document was thus published, which set out proposals that bore a resemblance to those in *In Place of Strife* – including legally binding collective agreements to ward off unofficial strikes and a cooling off period when strike action was declared, as well as the establishment of a tribunal court to deal with offences. But the Industrial Relations (IR) Bill, as it became, also gave workers the right not to join a trade union – a blackleg’s charter, in the eyes of its critics. Most Labour-supporting industrial relations experts were certainly unimpressed. Flanders, for example, had blasted the IR act as ‘doctrinaire’ and ‘reactionary’, while Hugh Clegg, another member of the Nuffield Group and the director of the Industrial Relations Research Unit at Warwick University, warned that it was ‘a mistake to suppose that the ‘British disease’ will be cured by arming trade union officials and sending them round to act as policemen.’<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Cited in Leo Panitch, *Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy: The Labour Party, the Trade Unions and Incomes Policy, 1945-74* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 231.

<sup>326</sup> Kelly, *Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions*, p. 136; Hugh Clegg, *How to Run an Incomes Policy... and Why We Made Such a Mess of the Last One* (London, 1971), p. 88.

The response to the IR Bill from the PLP was equally disapproving. In a backbench meeting held to discuss the bill on 9 December 1970, for example, it was described as ‘a labyrinth of unworkable complexity’, and various MPs from all wings of the party hastened to denounce it; from the right, James Tinn felt it was ‘unworkable and unacceptable’, and that its repeal was a necessary prerequisite for any returning Labour Government, while Jack Ashley declared that ‘the public must be shown that this bill is not a legitimate strait-jacket to restrain militancy but an attack on the basic rights of organised labour’. Many of those same MPs, however, were also concerned about the impact that opposition to the bill would have on the rule of law, in a way that the left was not. Ashley had advised the PLP to ‘condemn industrial actions for political ends; strikes against the law were as bad as law [sic] against strikes’, while Charles Pannell – the voice of old-school Gaitskellite trade unionism – beseeched those present ‘not [to] sign documents or join platforms advocating direct action.’ One MP went even further, by actually attacking his colleagues for criticising the bill. Christopher Mayhew stated that, as he had considered the principles behind *In Place of Strife* to be correct, he could not countenance a *volte-face* when similar legislation was tabled. The party, he said, ‘took no account of public opinion, which wanted Union powers curbed’.<sup>327</sup> Although roundly criticised by other MPs at the meeting, Mayhew’s apprehensions became more influential among a minority of right-wingers as the decade wore on.

The bill was duly passed as legislation, but leading unions boycotted the registration process and the industrial relations court while establishing a platform of civil disobedience that included a ‘Day of Protest’ at the Albert Hall in January 1971. By denouncing it as an iniquitous law in this way they rendered the Industrial Relations Act effectively inoperable; the challenge for Labour, therefore, was to replace its provisions with a more effective régime that would rely on union support. As early as 1970, Thomas Balogh – a key Wilsonian agent

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<sup>327</sup> LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 9 December 1970.

for technocratic reform – had written a Fabian pamphlet entitled *Labour and Inflation*, which had brought the term ‘social contract’ into vogue as a shorthand for the voluntary arrangements that, once Labour had committed itself to repealing the IR Act, were destined to come into being upon returning to government. Balogh had envisaged a *quid pro quo* between the unions and the state: if the former were to accept that ‘an effective incomes policy demands very much more government intervention than has been contemplated hitherto’, then the latter in return must guarantee that the resulting sacrifices would be temporary and that any centralised plan would ultimately lead to a rise in living standards.<sup>328</sup> At much the same time, Hugh Clegg – not a fan of any kind of incomes policy, but resigned to the fact that there would be further attempts at one – had written a short booklet defining how it could work, which urged the Government to aim for a clear agreement with the unions before implementing anything, and maintained that the latter would be best encouraged into accepting incomes policy if they understood it as a measure requiring co-operation freely rendered rather than as a straitjacket into which they should be forced.<sup>329</sup>

A year later, Jack Jones of the TGWU revealed that he was ‘cautiously thinking about talks’ with Labour over a new attempt at incomes policy, and declared at the 1971 party conference that ‘there is no reason at all why a joint policy cannot be worked out.’<sup>330</sup> A TUC-Labour Party liaison committee was soon created as a forum for both the party and the unions to formulate the policies of a future Labour Government. It produced a statement on economic policy in 1973 which argued for, among other things, sizeable increases in pensions and benefits; this became one of the foundational blocks of the party’s future election manifesto, and was clearly meant as the price to be paid by the Government for industrial co-operation. The statement’s focus on cost-of-living problems indicates how, by

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<sup>328</sup> Thomas Balogh, *Labour and Inflation*, Fabian Tract 403 (London, 1970), p. 60.

<sup>329</sup> Clegg, *How to Run an Incomes Policy*, p. 88.

<sup>330</sup> Taylor, *Trade Union Question*, p. 224; *Guardian*, 15 January 1971.

asking – rather than compelling – union leaders to assist in the pursuit of progressive goals, the hope was that it would defeat sectional interests within the unions and sweeten the pill of wage restraint. Jones's involvement in the genesis of the social contract indicates how much the socialist left within the Labour movement was able to progress towards assuming positions of influence. This was noticed with some unease by the more radical revisionists: Bill Rodgers, for one, aside from his reservations that the social contract would prove 'inflationary', cited the involvement of Jones and Hugh Scanlon as the reason for his initial doubts that it would work.<sup>331</sup>

When the minority Labour Government was formed in March 1974 its programme was backed by the TUC, and four months later the IR Act and the reviled arbitration court had been successfully repealed and replaced by a new law, the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act. Following Labour's second general election victory moves were accelerated to clarify how the contract would work in practice. At the 1974 TUC Congress, for example, guidelines were issued to negotiators for future rounds of bargaining, which specified that real incomes should be maintained and that increases in pay should only be settled year-on-year.<sup>332</sup> Further progress was made amid continuing unease concerning reports of excessive wage demands, and eventually in July 1975 a white paper was produced by the Cabinet which issued terms dictating a maximum of £6 per week increase for the entire year, with none at all for workers receiving over £8500.

Thus began Phase I of the social contract. What did the Labour right think of it once it was in action? With most of its senior figures back in the Cabinet, there was little open dissent from the policy. Tony Crosland, speaking in February 1975, judged it to be the only alternative to 'large-scale unemployment', remarking that it 'asks all of us to recognise our

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<sup>331</sup> Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals*, p. 136.

<sup>332</sup> MRC, Papers of Jack Jones, MSS.625/8/12 – 'The Development of the Social Contract', TUC pamphlet, 9 July 1975.

dependence on each other. No man, no union, is an island.’<sup>333</sup> Susan Crosland later recounted her husband’s opinion that the outstanding success of this period in government had been the involvement of trade unions in formulating national economic policy.<sup>334</sup> Some of the more discontented right-wingers had very different ideas, of course, but during these early days of the contract they were reluctant to denigrate it, despite its leftist provenance. Reg Prentice, for example, recognised that defending the sanctity of the contract could actually be used as a stick to shake at the unions. Speaking in the same month as Crosland, he railed at the ‘selfish demands of well-organised groups’ for putting the contract in peril, opining that ‘Every member of the TUC General Council should stump the country in support of the social contract... The Government have kept their share of the bargain. The trade unions must not waltz on their side.’<sup>335</sup> If brotherly co-operation and shared effort were Crosland’s watchwords, then Prentice – while paying lip-service to these ideals – was much more preoccupied by the possibility that the unions were ‘not keeping their word’.<sup>336</sup>

Nonetheless, support for the contract in its formative years held firm, and the urge towards ‘discipline’ that it embodied (without any sanctions attached) reassured ‘moderate’ trade union figures who supported free collective bargaining in principle but worried about the impact of industrial agitation on both the party and the governance of the country. Chief among these, again, was Frank Chapple of the EETPU (Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union, as the ETU had been named since merging with the Plumbers’ Union in 1968) who had taken over from Leslie Cannon as President following the latter’s death in 1970. Despite his apprehension towards earlier incomes policies, Chapple had by the mid-1970s come round to the idea of state intervention, stating that ‘[It] is a nonsense to talk of a situation where the Government would not have a policy affecting

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<sup>333</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 13/24 – Speech on the Social Contract, 21 February 1975.

<sup>334</sup> Crosland, *Tony Crosland*, p. 355.

<sup>335</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 2/7 – Press Release, 28 February 1975.

<sup>336</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 6/17 – ‘Rubicon papers’, chapter six of unpublished autobiography, p. 24.

wages.<sup>337</sup> At the TUC Congress in 1975 he argued that wage settlements were increasingly a ‘contributing factor to inflation’. ‘Who really believes that if wages were to continue to rise at 25% per year indefinitely that this Labour Government could curb inflation or deal with all the damaging things that flow from it?’<sup>338</sup> However, as with Prentice, Chapple’s support for the contract was conditioned as much by his opposition to the union left as by any belief in the initiative itself. Criticising opponents of the contract as militants who ‘hope to achieve by way of economic and social chaos those political changes they could never achieve through the ballot box’, he argued in his TUC speech that their actions were motivated not by class consciousness or revolutionary struggle, as those on the far left claimed, but were in fact highly sectional and materialist in nature.<sup>339</sup>

Chapple was thus never fully committed to the rationale of the contract, and at times he found it difficult to conceal his ambivalence: in a later speech, for example, he stated that the contract was, at most, a ‘temporary brake on wage inflation’ and should never be seen as a ‘substitute for progressive government economic policies’. These reservations, he claimed, were why he had opposed the 1966 freeze (it had led, he claimed to a wage ‘explosion’ thereafter), and why he believed neither *In Place of Strife* nor the IR Act would have achieved even a ‘modicum of social justice as we know it’ (for neither policy, in his view, took into account the role that unions had to play as the defenders of working-class living standards).<sup>340</sup> Chapple’s pessimism was reinforced by his rank-and-file, who began to chafe at the constraints placed on their ability to bargain effectively. During the three years in which the contract was enforced the EETPU struck against pay limits three times, and at the 1977 union conference motions were carried supporting a return to collective bargaining and

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<sup>337</sup> MRC, Chapple, MSS.387/6/CH/27 – Draft of speech, undated.

<sup>338</sup> MRC, Chapple, MSS.387/6/CH/27 – Speech at 1975 TUC Congress.

<sup>339</sup> MRC, Chapple, MSS.387/6/CH/27 – Speech at 1975 TUC Congress.

<sup>340</sup> MRC, Chapple, MSS.387/6/CH/52 – ‘Incomes Policy – Voluntary or Necessary?’, undated.

condemning wage restraint.<sup>341</sup> Their main bone of contention was the lack of any relationship between skills, productivity and pay, with an essentially flat rate of increases being imposed across all sectors. As Chapple commented in 1978, the erosion of wage differentials for skilled employees in particular was disenchanting ‘the very groups that we need to encourage if output is to be raised’ – echoing a warning that had been made by the union’s Executive Council even as it had approved the contract three years beforehand.<sup>342</sup>

The ructions inside the EETPU were eventually repeated elsewhere for fundamentally similar reasons. Not that this was immediately apparent: until 1976 the contract still appeared to be working well: although overall price inflation still remained in double figures that year, it was down from its peak of 27 per cent. Productivity, meanwhile, rose after the declines experienced during 1974–75. Union leaders congratulated themselves on remaining within the £6 per week pay limit, emphasising the ‘short-term sacrifices’ they were making, and in 1976 they agreed on a second year of wage restraint – with the upper pay-increase limit reduced to £4.50 per week.<sup>343</sup> Taken alongside the spending cuts that were demanded by the International Monetary Fund that same year, however, this reduction arguably marked the moment when the unions began to retreat from their existing commitments, and at the TUC Congress in 1977 a resolution was carried for a return to ‘normal collective bargaining’.<sup>344</sup> As Phase II of the contract came to an end, so worries emerged about how it could be sustained. The Manifesto Group, a centre-right parliamentary pressure group (explored in greater detail in chapter four), produced a document in June 1977 identifying pay growth as once again lagging behind inflation, which ‘meant that real living standards have been cut, and there is

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<sup>341</sup> MRC, Chapple, MSS.387/6/CH/33 – Excerpts from 1977 EETPU conference, carried resolutions (Executive Council Motion – Free Collective Bargaining).

<sup>342</sup> Frank Chapple, ‘Where Does the Weakness Lie?’, *Contact*, December 1978; MRC, Chapple, MSS.387/6/CH/27 – ‘Economy and the Social Contract’, no. 94, minutes no. 6, press release, 1975.

<sup>343</sup> MRC, Papers of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), MSS.292D/1104433A/3 – Speech by Norman Willis on the Social Contract, 16 June 1976.

<sup>344</sup> *Report of the 109<sup>th</sup> Annual Trades Union Congress* (London, 1977), p. 582.

no way these cuts can be made good in real terms in the immediate future.’ The document expressed worries about the consequences this would have for the Government’s long-term economic strategy, not to mention its electoral fortunes; in particular, it warned that such trends were giving succour to the contract’s critics, as they ‘raised the question of whether agreeing voluntarily to keep wages down has any significant effect in keeping prices down.’<sup>345</sup>

Both the Government and the TUC did their best to patch up what was becoming an increasingly untenable situation. A further year of restraint was begrudgingly accepted (albeit not officially ‘agreed’) by the unions that limited rises over the next twelve months to 10 per cent, and the TUC tried to ensure that its affiliates stuck to the policy of arranging wage settlements at annual intervals. ‘The outcome’, says Taylor, ‘was rather ragged but with considerable patience, flexibility and more than a touch of luck the 1977–78 wage round was weathered.’<sup>346</sup> However, the growing inflation bubble – fuelled by a purple patch of higher economic growth – was by now leading to fears of a ‘pay explosion’ that would reverse these hard-won gains. Over the next year wages on average exceeded the 10 per cent limit, and when the Cabinet sat down in December 1977 to discuss future economic prospects James Callaghan – now Prime Minister following Wilson’s resignation – suggested that the limit at the next round should be reduced to 5 per cent. Callaghan had, moreover, come to the conclusion that the current *ad hoc* arrangements, negotiated annually, needed to be replaced by a more permanent policy of continual wage restraint. The discontent over such developments proved difficult to contain, and when striking workers at a Ford factory in Essex won an eventual settlement of approximately 15 per cent in late 1978 the Government

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<sup>345</sup> LHASC, Manifesto Group papers (MANIF), 1/3 – ‘After Phase Two’, June 1977.

<sup>346</sup> Taylor, *Trade Union Question*, p. 249.

was prevented from imposing sanctions on the company, effectively ensuring that the contract was now no more than a dead letter.

Few outside the Government seemed to mourn its passing. This was to be expected from the many Communist and 'broad left' union figures who viewed the contract as nothing more than an exploitative 'social con trick', but there were also some on the Labour right who had never agreed with the fundamental principles behind the contract in the first place. Brian Walden, writing shortly after he left parliament in 1977, had this to say:

Once a political party openly states that in return for general co-operation it will legislate to meet particular wishes of a vested interest, then it has surrendered some of the power of government. It matters no [sic] whether the vested interest is benign... What matters is that the public have been made unmistakably aware of the fact that its government intends to placate a group at the expense of the whole; to concede to an organisation what it would never grant to an individual.<sup>347</sup>

Others of a similar mindset recanted their previous support once it became clear that the contract had no future even as a deflationary device. Reg Prentice admitted that 'as a shadow minister and later as a cabinet minister I plead guilty to my share of responsibility for the so-called social contract.' Having once lectured trade unionists on their moral obligation not to breach the boundaries set by the contract, he conceded that he 'took the whole concept of bargaining between the TUC and the Government much too far... I would like to think that we can now enter a healthier situation for our democracy by separating out the function of the TUC and the Government. In recent years the dividing line has become too blurred.'<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Brian Walden, 'The Power Brokers', *Time and Tide*, 3 September 1977.

<sup>348</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 6/9 – 'Trade Union Power in the Modern State', undated.

Prentice's references to 'democracy' are an indication of his contemporaneous campaign to stand up for 'the rule of law', which had already brought him into conflict with the unions (see chapter five). But it also reflected the unease he and other right-wingers, such as Walden, felt at the sight of an unelected grouping of powerful union leaders being able to impose many of their demands onto the Government seemingly at will. The problem was that their solution – a renewed effort towards a statutory incomes policy – demanded a restructuring of the traditional relationship between party and unions that only empowered the latter: whereas Labour Governments were to be given *carte blanche* to regulate strike action by law, the unions were required to cease co-operating with government on economic policy and return solely to the industrial arena. As we shall see, restricting the unions' prerogatives in this way was an increasingly popular notion on the Labour right, but there were still a few from that stable who were convinced that industrial reform and union co-operation could be harnessed for the furtherance of social-democratic objectives.

### **Industrial Democracy**

If intervention in the setting of wages was desirable, then it had to be accompanied by mechanisms that would reorganise industry to better suit the interests and changing circumstances of the workforce. One of Labour's manifesto commitments in 1974, and a key part of the social contract, was that worker-directors would be elected by the unions to serve on company boards, a proposal known by the rubric of 'industrial democracy'. As John Elliott explains, the main reason why industrial democracy became such a prominent topic throughout the late 1970s was because it 'involves far more than workers' rights in the board room and on the shop floor... it takes the issue into the realms of national economic and other

policies of governments.’<sup>349</sup> Given the opportunities it presented for introducing an element of democracy in working life, not to mention the prospect of tackling the myriad problems that had befallen British industry, it was a concept which should – at least in theory – have animated the revisionist right. Here was a chance to devolve responsibility to the workforce, granting them the freedom to improve their overall wellbeing and tackle the ‘alienation’ that so often befell industry.

But while such ideals may have seemed attractive, they quickly ran into the much more complex realities of the situation. One immediately apparent issue concerned the fact that industrial democracy is not a uniform notion, and its different variants brought forth adherents from all parts of the political spectrum. The notion of ‘workers’ control’ had a long pedigree in British politics, but by the 1960s and 1970s it was embodied by the Institute of Workers’ Control (IWC), a New Left body that gained traction on the fringes of the movement. The Institute’s leaders, Ken Coates and Tony Topham, opposed the public corporation models endorsed by both revisionist Keynesians and the socialist left after the war, insisting that the bureaucratic, nationalised oligarchy it had unleashed was merely capitalism with a more human face. ‘Workers’ control’, they insisted, promised a radical new era of total equality, allowing producers to break free from the alienation marking their daily existence in order to become the guardians of their own labour.<sup>350</sup> An alternative conception was that of ‘workers’ participation’, which envisaged the improvement of industrial relations by incorporating employees into management structures, thereby promoting the sharing power and responsibility rather than the overthrow of an exploitative élite. Within the avowedly reformist Labour Party, it is no surprise that it was the ‘participation’ ideal that gathered ground, and in 1967 a working party chaired by Jack Jones produced a report

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<sup>349</sup> John Elliott, *Conflict or Cooperation? The Growth of Industrial Democracy* (London, 1978), p. 3.

<sup>350</sup> See Ken Coates and Tony Topham, *The New Unionism: The Case for Workers’ Control* (London, 1972).

endorsing industrial democracy on the grounds of efficiency, workers' protection, an extension of government 'by consent', and 'social accountability', emphasising the input of the unions as necessary to achieve it.<sup>351</sup>

The possibilities inherent in radical workplace reorganisation attracted many from the Labour left. Stuart Holland, a former economic adviser to Harold Wilson, presented industrial democracy as an integral part of his 'Alternative Economic Strategy', an interventionist paradigm that repudiated the Keynesian doctrines of Croslandite revisionism in favour of greater expansion of public control and ownership, which he believed would marginalise the giant international corporations that dominated Britain's economy. In his book *The Socialist Challenge* Holland devoted an entire chapter to arguing for democratisation in the workplace, envisaging it as part of the greater project of socialist transformation throughout society without which 'public enterprise and strategic planning could as easily promote state capitalism and a corporatist state as socialism.'<sup>352</sup> Holland's theses attracted support from the likes of Tony Benn, whose enthusiasm for grassroots activism dovetailed with the ethics of 'participation'; throughout the 1970s he was to extol the virtues of joint-decision making between government and workers 'at every level of industrial life.'<sup>353</sup>

In contrast, the right had traditionally been rather apprehensive about such ideas, especially if they were thought to interfere with existing trade union practices. In a 1959 *Encounter* essay, for example, Tony Crosland highlighted the puzzle that industrial democracy posed to people in the movement. 'We seem to be emotionally in favour of the idea, but remain vague as to what could actually be done, or even precisely why', he said. 'This is hardly surprising. For there is a range of possible motives – some are interested in

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<sup>351</sup> LHASC, Papers of the National Executive Committee (NEC), 93 – 'Industrial Democracy: Paper 2 for Meeting of Research Officers', 21-23 January 1972.

<sup>352</sup> Stuart Holland, *The Socialist Challenge* (London, 1975), p. 255.

<sup>353</sup> CAC, Papers of Tam Dalyell (TADA), 2/141 – Letter: Tony Benn to Tam Dalyell, 19 March 1976, encompassing statements relating to Benn's candidacy for the leadership election.

rising productivity, others in eliminating alienation, still others in giving the worker his “just” rights...’ Crosland’s own views at the time, as expressed in the same essay, were that two sides in industry had always existed, that the unions would object to industrial democracy on the grounds that workers’ representatives should always remain independent of management, and that more analysis needed to be done on those countries that had already experimented with workers’ management; all in all, a cautious and somewhat sceptical approach.<sup>354</sup> Fifteen years later, and now in government, his attitude had mellowed to the extent that he identified industrial democracy as a ‘priority area’ in the ‘domestic field’, commenting on ‘the growing revolt against authoritarian management’ in the workplace and the dullness of routine jobs. But he still worried about how workers themselves would respond to calls for democratisation of the workplace, and believed that further devolution of bargaining to the local plant level would make a greater impact on company management decisions.<sup>355</sup>

A select few moderates, however, were more appreciative of what industrial democracy had to offer, particularly if it could be used as a vector for their own underlying ideas. Roy Jenkins, for instance, had already spoken about ‘increas[ing] the influence of workers on matters which concern them as individuals or in small work groups, and on matters of company policy in general.’<sup>356</sup> His interest remained largely superficial, however, and it fell to one of his young admirers, Giles Radice, then head of research at the GMWU, and later an MP in the County Durham coalfield, to flesh out how a revisionist approach to industrial democracy might develop. In 1972 he authored a pamphlet, *Working Power*, which envisioned ‘new democratic structures’ in industry. Some of these involved the modification of existing innovations, such as the extension of collective bargaining procedures and the provision of further opportunities for education and recruitment, but at the heart of his

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<sup>354</sup> Anthony Crosland, ‘What Does the Worker Want?’, *Encounter*, February 1959.

<sup>355</sup> Anthony Crosland, *Socialism Now and Other Essays* (London, 1974), pp. 49-50.

<sup>356</sup> Roy Jenkins, *What Matters Now* (London, 1972), p. 90.

proposals was the commitment to putting employee representatives on company boards, which he argued should amount to 50 per cent of all members of policy-making boards on nationalised industries, together with the establishment of a new Companies Act for the provision of two-tier supervisory boards – again with 50 per cent worker representation – on all companies with employee rolls of over 2,000 people.<sup>357</sup>

Radice's advocacy of industrial democracy was predicated on the notion that it would improve not only the worker's material well-being but their sense of self, and in so doing effect change on a national scale. In his book *The Industrial Democrats*, published in 1978, he wrote that allowing employees to participate in management structures would

help to reduce that feeling of alienation so characteristic of British industry and increase the sense of commitment to the enterprise which is so necessary to our economic recovery. It should also provide a framework within which it should be possible to minimise the areas of conflict and maximise the areas of cooperation... It should become easier to remedy some of the main faults of British industry – a resistance to change and an ineffective use of investment, including manpower.<sup>358</sup>

Radice also connected feelings of alienation with wider issues of inequality, including 'those of rewards and power.'<sup>359</sup> His position demonstrated that concepts like 'alienation' had even crept in to revisionist discourses, and that it was not only neo-syndicalists like Topham and Coates who were concerned about individual self-realisation and autonomy. But if the IWC preached the necessity of conflict, Radice hoped that empowering workers – and instilling in them a sense of positive freedom – would lower the temperatures then engulfing industry.

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<sup>357</sup> Giles Radice, *Working Power*, Fabian Tract 431 (London, 1974), p. 19.

<sup>358</sup> Giles Radice, *The Industrial Democrats: Trade Unions in an Uncertain World* (London, 1978), p. 214.

<sup>359</sup> Radice, *Industrial Democrats*, p. 106.

Consensus was his overall objective, to be delivered by a system of ‘dual power’ between management and employees rather than the triumph of one group over the other.<sup>360</sup>

Whereas Radice saw industrial democracy largely as the manifestation of existing revisionist ideals – of equality in the workforce, freedom and democracy for the worker, and consensual forms of progress – for another youthful supporter of the Labour right, Peter Jay, it formed the key component of a novel form of ‘market socialism’ that he wished to introduce throughout the country. Jay’s reflections on this matter were idiosyncratic: the term ‘market socialism’ may have a long international history, but he deployed it specifically in relation to the problems facing the British political and economic system in the 1970s. His ‘chosen definition of socialism’ remained gradualist in nature, resting on the ‘principle that a free democratic society was entitled to make collective decisions about its own character and development if rational, fact-based utilitarian assessment showed that the happiness of the greatest number would be served thereby.’<sup>361</sup> However, his earlier, conventional Keynesian notions for managing the economy had been supplanted by an adherence to contemporary ‘monetarist’ ideas concerning price control, and it was this quixotic desire to synthesise the market discipline of capitalism with the collectivist values of social-democracy that marked him out as a genuine radical, one whose ambitions were large enough to formulate a ‘general hypothesis’ that would restructure the national economy in its entirety.<sup>362</sup>

In the field of industrial relations, Jay’s ‘big idea’ was that full employment could no longer be pursued alongside collective bargaining except at the price of an ‘ever-accelerating rate of inflation’ and, perhaps, the gradual fragmentation of the democratic state itself.<sup>363</sup> In this scenario, it was collective bargaining that he believed ought to be sacrificed as a policy

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<sup>360</sup> Radice, *Working Power*, p. 21

<sup>361</sup> Jay, *An Unfinished Life*, p. 142.

<sup>362</sup> Peter Jay, ‘Employment, Inflation and Politics’, Occasional Paper 46, in Peter Jay, *A General Hypothesis of Employment, Inflation and Politics*, Sixth Wincott Memorial Lecture (London, 1976).

<sup>363</sup> Jay, *An Unfinished Life*, p. 209.

objective, for unlike other monetarists Jay did not consider high unemployment a price worth paying if inflation was to be defeated.<sup>364</sup> This marked him out from those advocates of industrial democracy, such as Radice and the TUC, who saw it as a route to improving opportunities for plant bargaining.<sup>365</sup> Nevertheless, if collective bargaining was to be curtailed then something had to take its place. Incomes policy, the hope of so many revisionists, remained in Jay's view 'a short-term Dunkirk-like emergency expedient'; instead, he envisioned a new landscape of employee-managed firms, which through the processes of cooperation and competition would help 'clear' the labour market at the appropriate price and so ease unemployment.<sup>366</sup> Jay's plan mandated that all enterprises employing more than 100 people would be converted into workers' cooperatives, which he defined in 1977 as 'enterprises in which the freehold ownership of the assets of the business is vested in the members collectively.'<sup>367</sup> These would draw resources from private sector banks and act largely free of corporate influence – a crucial difference from other 'market socialists', who championed the role of state agencies as a financier of first resort.<sup>368</sup>

Jay's ideas made little impression on the mainstream Labour right, most of whom declined to engage with his thinking. One of those who did, the ex-MP and journalist Woodrow Wyatt – who was already gravitating towards the Thatcherite Right – expressed the long-standing doubts of many revisionists about the value of cooperatives, telling Jay that it would be 'hopeless' to have management elected by workers (as those 'who are the least efficient would get the jobs') while recounting his own fruitless attempts to persuade them to take an interest in the finances and administration of the companies he had been involved

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<sup>364</sup> Jay, 'Employment, Inflation and Politics', p. 17.

<sup>365</sup> Michael Hatfield, *The House the Left Built: Inside Labour Policy Making, 1970-75* (London, 1978), p. 54.

<sup>366</sup> Jay, *An Unfinished Life*, p. 206.

<sup>367</sup> Peter Jay, 'The Workers' Cooperative Economy', speech given to the Manchester Statistical Society (Manchester, 1977), p. 1

<sup>368</sup> Ben Jackson, 'Currents of Neo-Liberalism: British Political Ideologies and the New Right, c.1955-1979', *English Historical Review*, cxxxi:551 (2016), pp. 846-7.

in.<sup>369</sup> Jay's response, although deferring to Wyatt's point of view, nevertheless revealed his broader hopes for 'participatory socialism' in the context of a reformed market economy. The main appeal of cooperatives, he explained, was that they promised a corrective to some of the deficiencies of character in British industry, especially the 'short-term attitudes' of management that had brought it to its present condition. But he also echoed Radice by speaking of how the worker could become a freer citizen, as well as a more productive employee. '[I]t seems to me', he wrote, 'that only a system of worker co-operatives can give people the sense of having an identity of interest with the enterprise in which they work, which could correct the alienation and so abate the apathy.'<sup>370</sup>

In parliament, advocates of 'participation' made a substantial leap forward when Radice co-sponsored a private member's bill, introduced in 1975, that would have made it mandatory for all firms of more than 2,000 employees to have elected workers' representatives on boards. The bill made it to the committee stage, discomfiting the Government: although committed to introducing an Industrial Bill, as per the manifesto, ministers preferred to launch an inquiry in order to examine the issue first.<sup>371</sup> Attempts to circumvent the bill then led to a split between left and right: several 'Tribunite' MPs on the committee walked out once it became clear that the Government planned to issue a separate white paper that would feature discussions with business leaders as well as the TUC, while Radice, as a loyal backbencher, pronounced himself 'satisfied with the assurances' given by the new Secretary for Industry, Eric Varley, that the bill's 'principles' would not be compromised.<sup>372</sup> The Government ultimately got its way, and once it had persuaded Radice to withdraw his bill completely a Committee of Inquiry was formed in its place under the chairmanship of the Oxford historian Sir Alan (later Lord) Bullock.

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<sup>369</sup> CAC, Papers of Peter Jay (PJAY), 5/2/2 – Letter: Woodrow Wyatt to Peter Jay, 30 December 1975.

<sup>370</sup> CAC, PJAY, 5/2/2 – Letter: Peter Jay to Woodrow Wyatt, 13 January 1976.

<sup>371</sup> *Guardian*, 23 May 1975.

<sup>372</sup> *Times*, 11 and 14 June 1975.

Although disparaged by Lewis Minkin as a ‘delaying device’, the committee included some stringent advocates of workers’ participation from both the unions and academia, most notably Jack Jones, David Lea, the head of the TUC’s economic department, and the trade union law theorist Lord Wedderburn.<sup>373</sup> They produced a report which recommended that worker-directors, elected by the unions, should have places reserved for them on the boards of firms with a workforce of more than 2000, but only on condition that a referendum of all employees be held beforehand. If approved, shareholders and unions would each appoint  $x$  number of representatives each, with an independent  $y$  appointee supplied by the Government acting as an arbiter (known as the  $2x+y$  formula). However, the three business executives on the committee (N. P. Biggs, Sir Jack Callard and Barrie Heath) dissented from the majority conclusion, taking the view that ‘some solutions favoured in the Majority Report... are not likely to be in the interests either of the people who work in industry or of the nation.’<sup>374</sup> Industrial democracy, they claimed, should be welcomed if it ‘enabled an open and effective sharing of the real and practical problems of industry to take place’, but only on a voluntary basis and not as a ‘simple capitulation to strong sectional pressure’.<sup>375</sup> The minority further argued that employee-directors should be on the supervisory board in a two-tier system with a smaller representation than the shareholder body, and that it should not be necessary for these directors to have the backing of a union.

The labour historian Jim Phillips has described the hostile reaction to the report from this quarter as a reassertion of ‘business power’, which ‘cowed’ the Callaghan administration and conditioned it to fear that the proposals would harm private-sector business activity and investor confidence.<sup>376</sup> Phillips states that, whereas one might have expected the ‘proto-social

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<sup>373</sup> Minkin, *Contentious Alliance*, p. 174.

<sup>374</sup> *Report of the Committee of Enquiry on Industrial Democracy*, Cmnd. 6706 (London, 1977), p. 170.

<sup>375</sup> *Report of the Committee of Enquiry*, p. 171.

<sup>376</sup> Jim Phillips, ‘UK Business Power and Opposition to the Bullock Committee’s 1977 Proposals on Worker Directors’, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 31-32 (2011), p. 2

democrats' (as he refers to those who subsequently left the Labour Party for the SDP) in government to have been most in favour of the majority report, given its break from established traditions of industrial organisation, they were in fact among its 'strongest ministerial opponents'.<sup>377</sup> The two ministers on the right most involved with industrial policy were Shirley Williams, as Paymaster General, and Edmund Dell, the Trade Secretary. It was the latter who advised the Prime Minister to take into account the minority report's proposals, especially those regarding the parity of representation for workers and shareholders on boards. Although Dell reiterated the Government's pledge to uphold the basic recommendations of the report he nonetheless admitted in private discussions that 'there were political limitations to what could be enacted', while his emphasis on 'flexibility' and the need to respect existing arrangements between workers and management reflected his intention to achieve 'common ground' with employers' organisations and the City, whose representatives found it difficult to contain their opposition.<sup>378</sup> In so doing, he infuriated those who already felt that the Bullock report had not gone far enough: Tony Benn even accused Dell of being 'completely opposed to industrial democracy'.<sup>379</sup>

But it was not only revisionists in government that were uneasy about the report; so too were the 'old guard' of Labourist union leaders and representatives, who remained wary of the challenge it posed to existing assumptions inherent in its recommendations. Several moderate unions, in particular, made it clear that they would be unwilling to ally themselves with anything that could be perceived as putting them at a disadvantage. The GMWU, Radice's union, had given cautious approval to the committee when it embarked on consultation, but after the proposals were published its Executive Council set out a list of objections, castigating the report as 'too narrow, too far-removed from trade union

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<sup>377</sup> Phillips, 'UK Business Power', p. 4.

<sup>378</sup> MRC, TUC, MSS.292D/574.93/1 – TUC Economic Committee minutes, 14 June 1977; WES, Dell, MS.Eng.c.7605 – Press Notice on Industrial Democracy, 14 February 1977; *Financial Times*, 23 February 1977.

<sup>379</sup> Tony Benn, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries, 1977-80* (London, 1990), pp. 142-3.

organisation and collective bargaining, and not radical enough.<sup>380</sup> An even more aggressive line was taken by the EETPU, which adhered to the old mantra that worker-directors were neither fish nor fowl, leaving them in an ‘impossible situation as representatives of the workers charged at the same time with accepting joint responsibility for business decisions.’ Complaining that there were already far too many industrial trends ‘leading towards the corporate state’, the union warned that if shopfloor representatives were seen by the rank-and-file to have lost their independence by becoming absorbed into management, then ‘democracy itself will be at risk.’ Their solution was as expected: an expansion of collective bargaining up to corporate level, supported by improved training régimes.<sup>381</sup>

Again, the attachment to past practices may have seemed irrational to some, but the logic of Labourism – with its awareness of the eternal incompatibility between capital and labour – had again arisen to challenge the liberal ideals that came from brave new policies like workers’ participation. Those who had supported implementation of Bullock’s recommendations – such as Radice, who described them in the House of Commons as ‘a well-argued and constructive contribution to the debate’ – soon found themselves an embattled minority, especially after the retirement of Jack Jones as general secretary of the TGWU removed the most influential supporter of industrial democracy from the political scene.<sup>382</sup> The only evidence of firm achievements were the scattering of workers’ co-operatives that briefly existed, such as the Meriden motorcycle factory and the *Scottish Daily News* newspaper in Glasgow. For the party right, a combination of traditional trade unionist verities and revisionist indifference had conspired to smother any possibility that its leaders could become the champions of an innovative new policy for improving industrial relations, one that could introduce an element of freedom into workers’ lives. Too few were interested

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<sup>380</sup> MRC, TUC, MSS.292D/574.93/1 – ‘The GMWU, the Bullock Report and Industrial Democracy’, August 1977.

<sup>381</sup> MRC, TUC, MSS.292D/574.93/1 – ‘The EETPU and the Bullock Report’, undated (1977).

<sup>382</sup> *Hansard*, 924, col. 1497, 26 January 1977.

in challenging either existing trade union privileges or the business community's fears that control by powerful unions would hinder enterprise, and they were aided by a Government that was keen to kick the issue into the long grass.

### **The End of Labourism?**

The importance of the social contract to the Callaghan Government raised the issue of what the proper relationship between the party and the unions should be. For most of the twentieth century this had never been a serious question: the party was, after all, a *labour* party, which had been formed to defend the rights of the working proletariat, and the affiliation of the unions to the party under the umbrella of the wider 'movement' was seen as a natural consequence. As Victor Feather, the General Secretary of the TUC during the Heath era, proclaimed:

The Labour Party and the trade union movement each has its own responsibilities, and neither side wants to strain the loyalties which exist... If you look around the world to see where Social Democracy is strongest, there you will find a strong, united trade union movement and a strong, united Social Democratic Party, and the two have a close understanding.<sup>383</sup>

This was in some respects a simplification, for in parts of Europe where social-democracy was strong it was not taken for granted that the responsibilities of parties and unions should be separate: as the sociologist Duncan Gallie discovered in 1978, French trade unions –

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<sup>383</sup> Jenkins, *The Battle of Downing Street*, p. xi.

affiliated to communists as well as socialists – were much more willing to mobilise in order to achieve social and political change, whereas their British counterparts preferred to restrict themselves to issues of workplace representation.<sup>384</sup> Yet Feather's insight did manage to encapsulate the spirit of British Labourism as its adherents imagined it: two wings, the industrial and political, engaged in separate spheres and activity, but coming together in common bond to advance the interests of the working class.

However, as has been noted above, by the late 1960s the incursion of white-collar professionals and activists into the wider movement had, alongside the traditional Communist cadres, prised the party slowly away from gradualist, Labourist traditions. This was one of the ingredients which ensured that the dominance of moderate, working-class unions and their leaders – as found in the 1950s – could no longer be guaranteed. Such phenomena did not harm the unions themselves, coinciding as it did with the period when their strength was arguably at its greatest, but it understandably discomfited the Labour right. Peter Jenkins, one of the leading revisionist voices in the press, described the new situation in an article from 1975: 'During the past fifteen or so years – going back really to the advent on the scene of Frank Cousins – several important unions with big card votes at the Labour Party Conference have produced militant socialist leaders and this more than anything else has tilted the balance of the Labour Movement towards the left.'<sup>385</sup>

Unsurprisingly, there was little consensus as to how this uncertain terrain should be navigated. For many right-wingers, the solution was to become more focused on rectifying the democratic structures within the party in order to prevent the union 'bloc vote' from exerting an unhealthy influence on the decisions passed at the party's annual conferences. Lewis Minkin has explained how important the conference's decisions were in assuming

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<sup>384</sup> Duncan Gallie, *In Search of the New Working Class: Automation and Social Integration within the Capitalist Enterprise* (Oxford, 1978), p. 246.

<sup>385</sup> Peter Jenkins, 'The Future of the Labour Party', *Political Quarterly*, 46:4 (1975), p. 376.

control of the party's policies, and how the importance of the trade unions and the NEC 'encouraged a diffusion of power and circumscribed the position of the parliamentary leadership' when it came to policy formulation.<sup>386</sup> Gaining positions on these bodies for one's faction was therefore crucial, and this was a preoccupation both of centre-right parliamentary groups such as the Manifesto Group (see chapter four) and leading 'trade union right' figures such as James Callaghan, who received criticism from revisionists for his perceived accommodation of the unions.<sup>387</sup> Several MPs, meanwhile, supported the campaign for the bloc vote to be replaced with the 'democratic' option of 'one man, one vote', thereby aiming to reduce the power of the affiliated bodies and increase that of the ordinary member.

As early as the 1950s, however, there were already some on the right who were decrying the unions, asking whether the traditional relationship was worth preserving. The (Gaitskellite) Socialist Union, for instance, published a tract in 1952 declaring that 'There is no inevitability about the link between the labour movement and socialism', a message aimed at reminding the Labour Party that the unions would not necessarily support the outlook of its intelligentsia and could act as a block on progress.<sup>388</sup> Bill Rodgers, speaking three years later, conceded that union dominance of the party conference was 'undesirable'.<sup>389</sup> Even Crosland realised that the interests of the party and the wider movement were not synonymous, and argued that Labour should never consider itself to be a 'sectional' organisation that 'automatically agree[d] with everything that union leaders say'.<sup>390</sup> But some thought that the party was guilty of just that, and by the 1970s the more self-consciously intellectual revisionists feared that the party was now a 'union party' – that is to say, Labourism in its

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<sup>386</sup> Lewis Minkin, *The Labour Party Conference: A Study in the Politics of Intra-Party Democracy* (London, 1978), p. 317.

<sup>387</sup> David Marquand, 'The London Review of Books Started with an Interest in the Social Democrats, in the Days before the Party was Launched', *London Review of Books*, 1 October 1981.

<sup>388</sup> Socialist Union, *Socialism: New Statement*, p. 46.

<sup>389</sup> Fielding, "'Labourism' and Locating the British Labour Party", p. 7.

<sup>390</sup> *Observer*, 21 January 1973.

purest, more uncomplicated form. The unions were damned in this interpretation as imprisoned by their past, and accused of focusing only on maintaining their own historic privileges to the detriment of the changes needed if Britain was to become a modern society.

The most outspoken of these critics was John Mackintosh. In July 1977 Mackintosh wrote an article for the *Times* in which he pondered how the Labour Party could be revitalised by a realignment of the centre-left. He envisaged how much more effective the party's attempts at reform would be if it was unencumbered by the influence of the TUC, with no bloc vote in the electoral college, no presence on the NEC or even the right to sponsor candidates; had this been the state of affairs in 1969, then Castle would likely have succeeded in implementing *In Place of Strife*, and the 'current assumption that no British government can legislate on such matters without TUC approval would not have arisen.' Most of all, in this situation the party could have reached a 'reasonable *modus vivendi*' with the unions, allowing the latter to return to 'looking after their members' interests' rather than fostering backward, class-motivated industrial militancy, while the Government got on with the job of devising incomes policies.<sup>391</sup> Thus, the link between party and union was in Mackintosh's account an anachronistic, irrational hindrance for any purportedly 'radical' party that wished to act in the national interest, and its severance nothing short of a liberation.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that it was only middle-class revisionists who deplored the party's institutional ties with the unions. Undoubtedly there were still many 'traditionalist' MPs on the backbenches with zealously pro-union opinions of the kind once held by Ray Gunter, the Minister of Labour in the 1960s and former head of the railway clerks' union, who believed that the party had become dominated by intellectuals with no understanding of how working-class trade unionists think – thereby earning the lasting suspicion of Richard Crossman, in whose diaries Gunter was described as a 'kind of TUC

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<sup>391</sup> *Times*, 22 July 1977.

agent' and a 'traitor within the walls'.<sup>392</sup> But there were others like Reg Prentice, by his account 'a trade unionist since leaving school', who came to harbour their own doubts. As his earlier comments on the social contract indicate, by the 1970s Prentice shared Mackintosh's concerns about the unions' power and the potential it had for the infringement of democratic norms. 'Ministers must insist that they alone are responsible to Parliament and the nation for the government of the country. Under recent Governments, and particularly the present one, the TUC has been allowed to assume that they are doing a deal with Ministers.'<sup>393</sup> Following his defection to the Conservatives (see chapter five), he concluded that the unions' affiliation with Labour 'may have made sense years ago, but it makes no sense in 1978'. Unions, he said, should 'feel free to praise or criticise any Government', but must also aim to 'become less political.'<sup>394</sup>

Then there was George Brown, whose profile within the party was perceived as being much the same as that of Gunter; he had been a TGWU member since the early 1930s, and worked as a district organiser for that union until his election to parliament after the war. In the 1960s Brown authored a favourable short history of the trade union movement, to date unpublished, which asked if the Labour Party had become 'too closely involved with the unions', conducting an imaginary exercise (similar to that produced by Mackintosh in his *Times* article) positing that if Labour had been reinvented without its industrial links then it would have spelled an end for progressive, centre-left politics, as the Communist and Liberal Parties would do much better electorally at its expense.<sup>395</sup> But there were already hints elsewhere in his book at worries regarding union overreach, and in one chapter he remarked that he 'did not support the enforcement of compulsory trade unionism.'<sup>396</sup> It was this stance

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<sup>392</sup> Crossman, *Diaries*, Vol. 2, p. 252.

<sup>393</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 6/9 – 'Trade Union Power in the Modern State', undated.

<sup>394</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 6/7 – Press Release, 25 July 1978.

<sup>395</sup> WES, Brown, c.5176 – Book draft: 'Too Involved with the Labour Party?', undated.

<sup>396</sup> WES, Brown, c.5176 – Book draft: 'Too Much Victimisation?', undated.

which Brown cited when he left the Labour Party altogether in 1976, after the Trade Union and Labour Relations Bill – which restored the legal right for a closed shop, allowing employers to sack employees who did not belong to a trade union – was passed in parliament. His objections were not that different from those of Prentice and Mackintosh, but in focusing on the closed shop Brown emphasised what he saw as the threat to personal freedom which Labour and the unions now represented. ‘What pushed me overboard’, he said at the time, ‘was the sense that we are no longer standing for the individual but for a different kind of machine.’<sup>397</sup>

All of the above figures were (or had been) disaffected Labour parliamentarians. But what of the union right? To admit that organised labour was exerting too much control over its political counterpart was an easier proposition if one belonged only to the party, so it was not surprising that many unionists found it difficult to question the *status quo*. Labourist viewpoints remained strong, while Right-wing leaders such as David Basnett of the GMWU, Terry Duffy of the AUEW and Sid Weighell of the railwaymen’s union were stolidly faithful to the Government, occasionally earning them despairing critiques from those who expected them at least to take a stand against the leftist partisanship and divisive rhetoric found elsewhere in the movement.

But one union leader who did scrutinise the party-union link intently, earning himself a controversial reputation in the process, was the EETPU’s Frank Chapple. Chapple had little love for the Labour Party establishment: periods spent on the NEC in the late 1960s and on the National Economic Development Council left him with a poor opinion of those politicians he worked with, including Barbara Castle, and he shared Gunter’s perspective that too many MPs and ministers were divorced from the realities of workers’ lives.<sup>398</sup> He

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<sup>397</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 3 March 1976.

<sup>398</sup> Chapple, *Sparks Fly!*, pp. 104-6.

remained unimpressed by government and TUC policy throughout the next decade, instinctively preferring the folk wisdom of his union's rank-and-file to any elaborate schemes attacking traditional privileges that came out of Whitehall. Nonetheless, Chapple's efforts to assist the social contract demonstrated an awareness of the need for change, and when it collapsed his inclination was to help the Government tackle its difficulties. Writing for the union's in-house journal in late 1978, he stated emphatically that a 'Labour government is our government', adding that its 'weaknesses and faults do not arise from an antagonism of our aims and purposes.'<sup>399</sup> His approach at this stage remained essentially a Labourist one: although he recognised the need for unions to organise in the party to achieve their own instrumental aims, he nevertheless still viewed the party as the political wing of the movement.

What catalysed his change of viewpoint was the circumstances surrounding the 1979 general election. Chapple had always agreed with the rest of the right – both the revisionists and the traditional union men – that unions should be 'entirely confined to industrial relations and labour market matters' and must not become a 'battering ram for fundamental political change'.<sup>400</sup> He was thus left aghast by the 'industrial chaos' that raged during the 'Winter of Discontent', which he believed 'caused immense damage to the already deeply unpopular trade union movement'.<sup>401</sup> After the election results were declared he noted gloomily that 'Labour had only a fractional lead over Conservatives amongst skilled workers, and it is clear that a great many union members did not vote Labour.'<sup>402</sup> Now that the party was in opposition matters seemed only to get worse, and throughout 1980 he railed against continuing 'entryist' infiltration from the left and the élitist worldview it bred, which he claimed ignored the increasing diversity of mass opinion and alienated the moderate voters

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<sup>399</sup> Frank Chapple, 'A Labour Government is Our Government', *Contact*, September 1978.

<sup>400</sup> MRC, Chapple, MSS.387/6/CH/52 – Speech notes and drafts, 1980-84: speech notes, undated.

<sup>401</sup> Chapple, *Sparks Fly!*, p. 149; Frank Chapple, 'Wither Thou Guest...', *Contact*, September 1981.

<sup>402</sup> *Contact*, June 1979.

that Labour needed to win back from the Conservative fold.<sup>403</sup> Labour politics, he said, could ‘never be separated from the way in which real Labour voters think and feel’, and if the party failed to appreciate that then it was reasonable for the electorate to consider alternatives, as so many trade unionists had done in 1979.<sup>404</sup>

Chapple’s personal solution to combatting this array of problems was to diversify his union’s approach when dealing with the party system, strengthening Labour’s ailing right-wing forces on the one hand while building relationships outside of it on the other. This policy of differentiation led him to pursue constructive dialogue with the new Conservative Government on matters such as employee training and strike-free arrangements at selected industrial plants<sup>405</sup>, while also tacitly encouraging the formation of the SDP in 1981 (see chapter six). But Chapple also helped pursue the ‘fightback’ against the right’s enemies inside the movement, unrealistically imploring Roy Jenkins to seek re-election as a Labour MP upon his return from Brussels on the basis that a ‘Trade Union Campaign to Save the Labour Party’ was still viable, and helping to establish the ‘St. Ermins Group’, an alliance of union and party moderates who were devoted to co-ordinating their activities against the Labour left.<sup>406</sup> By urging a greater distance Chapple’s rationale was actually very similar to that of John Mackintosh, except that unlike the Scottish MP he was aware that *both* wings of the movement had the capacity to pull the other over the precipice, and that sometimes it was moderate unions like his own which needed to be protected from the party left and not the other way round.

This strategy was effectively a form of ‘post-Labourism’, crafted by an erstwhile Labourist as a shield against the left. It was, however, taken up by hardly anybody in the union movement outside of the EETPU. Chapple remained an unpopular figure among many

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<sup>403</sup> *Times*, 14 October 1980.

<sup>404</sup> Frank Chapple, ‘A Democratic Labour Party or...?’, *Contact*, March 1981.

<sup>405</sup> Philip Bassett, *Strike Free: New Industrial Relations in Britain* (London, 1986), p. 68.

<sup>406</sup> Frank Chapple, ‘Between Left and Centre’, *Encounter*, August 1980; Hayter, *Fightback!*, pp. 98-9.

active trade unionists for his belligerent stance against the TUC in public, and his rhetoric in the run-up to the 1983 general election – in which he suggested that unionists faced the choice of ‘socialism or survival’ – was viewed as needlessly rebarbative and, more importantly, as a violation of the principles of solidarity that underpinned trade unionism. But even though there were few takers for his ideas within the unions, among the right wing of the PLP there were several who were increasingly of the opinion that social-democracy could only survive if it sought out an alternative home. The issue that motivated them, once again, was freedom: viewing the unions as conservative, fundamentally irredeemable institutions, they despaired that their party could not break the unions’ grip, and in so doing they laid the groundwork for another. As H. M. Drucker put it:

When speakers at Labour meetings chant that the party is nothing without the unions, they point not simply to the continuing power of the unions but also to this continuing traditional link. Socialists who want to belong to a party which is not tied to the unions are quite right to think they had better leave the Labour Party.<sup>407</sup>

## **Conclusion**

On the surface, divisions over industrial relations would seem to be the most clear-cut example of the differences in perception that existed between the revisionist and traditionalist mindsets, given the impetus for reform prevalent among the former and the union affiliations of the latter. Stephen Meredith, writing in 2017, stated that the attempted introduction of incomes policy legislation, in particular, ‘divided revisionist social democracy within itself

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<sup>407</sup> Drucker, ‘Influence of Trade Unions on the Leadership of the Labour Party’, p. 260.

and revealed something of its underlying tensions and emerging intellectual, political and organisational fragmentation'.<sup>408</sup> The main cause for so much of the friction lay in alternative conceptions of how industry should organise itself. One ideal articulated the need for solidarity in opposition when confronted by pressures from management, and celebrated wage bargaining as a mechanism by which the true price of labour could be achieved. Another saw it as an unnecessarily damaging process that was primarily responsible for wage inflation, which only an enlightened system of consensus-led, state-directed planning could tackle. Given the impetus for reform prevalent among the revisionists and the trade union affiliations of the more traditional-minded members of the PLP, this would seem on the surface to be a typical example of an issue that separated the Labour right into two distinct camps.

The reality, however, was not so straightforward. Although incomes policy was most stridently advocated by MPs with a strong revisionist identity, such as John Mackintosh, the first attempts to put one in place was by a Cabinet minister, George Brown, who was sympathetic to the aims of organised labour. However, this conceals the fact that whereas many Labour MPs approved of a statutory policy, focused as they were on preventing the industrial strife that they believed had been caused by the unions' leftward drift, those who were more conciliatory to the unions preferred a voluntary commitment to reducing wage demands, based on mutual respect and a shared concern for workers' living standards. The contemporary innovation of industrial democracy also broke down boundaries among the right while putting up others, with a strange alliance of Labourists in moderate unions and revisionist ministers pouring cold water on the Bullock Committee's proposals for employee-directors, which had been supported by a small number of idealistic social-democrats. Lastly,

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<sup>408</sup> Stephen Meredith, 'A 'Brooding Oppressive Shadow'? The Labour Alliance, the 'Trade Union Question', and the Trajectory of Revisionist Social Democracy, c. 1969–1975, *Labour History Review*, 82 (3), p. 262.

the legacy of a decade of continuous struggle between party and union had persuaded not only radical revisionists but some of a previously 'traditional' mindset, most notably Reg Prentice, to accept that the established institutional link between unions and the party had to be cut if the latter was to govern effectively when in power. This had (unsurprisingly) less purchase within the industrial wing of the movement, but one union leader, Frank Chapple, came up with his own solution, suggesting that unions should consider other political alternatives alongside continued interventions on behalf of the Labour right in intra-party battles.

The debate, however, also revealed divisions within the right over which ethics should be prioritised. Those within the movement who understood the party-union link as the basis of the movement displayed a rationale that saw collective bargaining as the best way to ensure security in a hostile world. This was, in their eyes, an essential liberty that allowed the working-class to negotiate their own pay agreements in an otherwise hostile, exploitative world. Voluntary rather than statutory control was thus the unions' preference for an incomes policy, as it relied not on compulsion but on the freedom of unions to choose co-operation over agitation. In this, both the right and the left wings of the union 'establishment' were essentially as one, including even those leaders who were otherwise most sympathetic to modernising revisionist approaches. Conversely, for those who were convinced that the unions needed to be reformed, collective bargaining procedures in particular were often seen as the symbol of an anarchic, outdated, and ultimately irrational tradition that allowed trade unionists to prioritise their own highly sectional interests over the common good, although others preferred to focus on the freedom workers could enjoy if they were allowed to take (partial) control of their own workplace. Many Labour MPs who were most critical of the unions' role in public life, however, had also highlighted freedom as an ethical theme themselves, arguing that incursions by labour leaders into the realms of executive power had

corrupted government and was preventing it from acting in the interests of a whole – leading to the introduction of controversial measures such as the closed shop, which infringed on the worker’s right to choose whether or not to belong to a union. Furthermore, it was notions of freedom that motivated the subsequent pushback against the Labourist arrangement that kept party and union shackled together, as many social-democrats were persuaded that it was the exigencies of this relationship which prevented them from pursuing properly ‘socialist’ policies.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Crosland, Jenkins and the emergence of a liberal 'post-revisionism'

#### Introduction

If the battles raging within the trade unions presented a fundamental challenge to the 'traditionalist' identity, then the rift between the supporters of Anthony Crosland and Roy Jenkins that emerged at the beginning of the 1970s illustrated some of the tensions inherent within revisionism. Both men, now in their early 50s and at the peak of their careers, were rivals as well as friends, and both had ambitions to use their position within the right wing of the movement to succeed Harold Wilson as prime minister. But although they were identified as revisionists, having been at the forefront of support for Hugh Gaitskell's leadership in the early 1950s, their notions of how it should interact with the rest of the movement were often dissimilar. Jenkins had little affinity with the Labour Party's historic culture, and his idea of leadership was to advance causes by means of personal courage and principle, not through collective action or by appealing to the working-class sentiment. Crosland, on the other hand, was comfortable with Labourist traditions, and as the European debates had shown he was reluctant to make a stand on an issue if it threatened to disrupt the party's unity.

This divergence was reflected in their positioning: whereas Jenkins was exclusionary, with a large amount of trust placed in an inner circle (who responded in kind), Crosland was aware of the need for the PLP right to be open to the centre. Ideologically, however, the reverse was often true, with Jenkins more appreciative of pluralism and alternative approaches than Crosland, and as the divisions between their supporters grew more acute, so

too did their conception of how revisionism should be revised to tackle modern-day challenges. For Crosland, the impetus was to uphold the achievements of the previous quarter-century, advancing ever closer to the social equality that, for him, should remain the pressing priority for every socialist. But Jenkins – and, crucially, many of his allies – had become worried by the new mood that was enveloping the country: as chapter three documented, they did not like the ugly class divisions exacerbated by industrial unrest and the authoritarian element brought into the Government by the trade unions. This left them increasingly of the mind that society needed to be liberated from its stagnation by devolving power to the individual from the state, both in the economic and social spheres. The decline of Croslandite social-democracy can thus be seen as a rejection not of equality *per se* but of its place as the principal ethic in the revisionist pantheon, and the efforts by some on the right to refocus their attention onto liberty instead.

The scope of this chapter is to explore how the lasting ‘breach’ between Crosland and Jenkins emerged, and the impact it specifically had on the revisionist right in terms of its overall approach. This entails a study of the personal friction between the two camps and the differences – as well as the similarities – in how they believed their creed should be updated. It goes on to review the 1976 leadership election and the emergence of Crosland as one of the new premier James Callaghan’s closest allies, before the sterling crisis in late 1976 brought to an end many of the assumptions that defined the Croslandite political economy. Thereafter, there are two sections on the libertarian, decentralist philosophy that many of the ‘radical’ revisionists started to develop from 1976 onwards: the first investigates the Manifesto Group and its prescriptions for what social-democrats ‘must do’ in the future, while the second analyses the output of certain thinkers inside the parliamentary party who shared a liberal outlook on social developments and an increasing suspicion of state power, which eventually fostered the development of an avowedly ‘post-revisionist’ attitude.

### **Crosland and Jenkins: the breach**

The period immediately following the vote on the EEC was, as Giles Radice relates, a deflating time for most revisionist social-democrats: the left was growing steadily in strength and influence, and Roy Jenkins in particular was becoming steadily more alienated from the majority in the party (see chapter two). His relationship with Anthony Crosland in particular, once so close, was now seriously strained. Both men had known each other since they were at university, and both had been primed to rise to the top of Labour party politics. If they had been hard to separate ideologically during the 1950s and 1960s, there was always a gulf between them in spirit: Crosland was forever a radical, if a self-conscious one, while the reason Jenkins attracted hostile barbs is because he genuinely enjoyed the attractions that being part of the governing class had to offer. During their undergraduate days at Oxford it was Crosland who was regarded as the senior figure of the two, but in 1967 Jenkins had been appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer ('the job Tony had wanted – and been preparing himself for – all his political life'<sup>409</sup>) ahead of him, and since then the balance of power was firmly in the younger man's favour.

Jenkins also outflanked Crosland by being able to attract considerable support to his cause, and his popularity within the party arguably reached its zenith between the vote on EEC entry in 1971 and his resignation as deputy leader six months later. His bevy of supporters, writes John Campbell, 'were now a recognised group within the Parliamentary Labour Party, largely drawn from the 1964 and 1966 intakes. There were some older members and one or two trade unionists, but most were youngish, ambitious, middle-class

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<sup>409</sup> Bryan Magee, 'Tony Crosland as I Knew Him', *Political Quarterly*, 81:2 (2010), p. 183.

and university-educated.<sup>410</sup> Although clearly of great potential, many observers thought the ‘Jenkinsites’ were sycophantic irritants: Gerald Kaufman, a centre-left MP who was formerly one of Harold Wilson’s aides, later described them as acting ‘like schoolgirls with a crush on the hockey mistress’, while Campbell acknowledges that they were widely viewed as ‘arrogant intellectuals’.<sup>411</sup> They had to withstand mockery both inside and outside of the party, which was exacerbated by the frequent press reports of Jenkins’s *bon vivant* lifestyle. But that did not hinder the genuine sense of loyalty and trust that the Jenkinsites felt towards their leader, and it was evident that they channelled their political ambitions through him: John P. Mackintosh, one of the more distinguished of his *epigoni*, was not alone in believing that it was Jenkins’s political fate that would ‘determine whether it is worth belonging to or working for the Labour Party any longer.’<sup>412</sup>

As chapter one explained, the bulk of the Jenkinsite faction were convinced Europeans who had taken substantial risks in order to vote for entry in October 1971, and one issue that inflamed them was Crosland’s decision to abstain on that occasion, which they interpreted either as cavilling and ‘indecisiveness’ or simply as ‘trimm[ing] his position for personal advancement’ in order to appeal to the party faithful.<sup>413</sup> There was undoubtedly some truth to this: before the vote had taken place his personal adviser, David Lipsey, had written to him explaining why abstention could harvest the votes of anti-EEC ‘right-wingers, party loyalists and middle-of-the-roaders’ in future shadow cabinet elections.<sup>414</sup> Crosland was perceptive enough to realise that he had damaged his reputation among the ‘CDS Eur. Right’ (in his view ‘now totally Jenkinsite’) by his ‘trimming’ and ‘dithering’, not to mention a ‘lack of consistency and courage’, and even admirers such as Bryan Magee felt that his character

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<sup>410</sup> Campbell, *A Well-Rounded Life*, p. 330.

<sup>411</sup> *Guardian*, 14 September 2002; Campbell, *A Well-Rounded Life*, p. 331.

<sup>412</sup> WES, Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 101 – Letter: John Mackintosh to Roy Jenkins, 19 September 1971.

<sup>413</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 19/3 – Susan Crosland’s journals, 7 December 1971; Dick Leonard, ‘Goodbye Tony’, *Economist*, 19 February 1977; Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals*, p. 124.

<sup>414</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 4/9 – D. L. (David Lipsey), ‘The Case for Abstention’, 22 October 1971.

had been corrupted by a lust for power.<sup>415</sup> Several of his critics, such as Bill Rodgers and David Marquand, later came to accept his justification that he simply did not share their enthusiasm for Europe, with Marquand concluding that ‘No handful of silver had seduced him from his allegiance. He had not shared our allegiance in the first place, or, if he had, he had ceased to do so.’<sup>416</sup> But whereas this realisation only unfolded over time, their anger at his ‘apostasy’ struck home instantly.

Thus, when Crosland stood as a candidate for the vacant deputy leadership position following Jenkins’s resignation, he was unable to secure the votes of a sizeable tranche of the Jenkinsite bloc – who opted instead for the inoffensive centrist Ted Short – and came third in the ballot. The 61 votes he harvested came as an unpleasant surprise to his team: another of Crosland’s associates, David Carlton, had been sanguine about the prospect that either Short or Michael Foot (the other contender) would be bolstered by right-wing votes, while Willie Hamilton told the press that their campaign was ‘gaining supporters from both the other candidates’.<sup>417</sup> In fact, some MPs, such as Eric Ogden, had written to inform Crosland that having endorsed him in previous internal elections they could not do so now, and at the meeting for the first ballot on 20 April Marquand admitted he had voted for Short, as had almost all of Jenkins’s allies.<sup>418</sup> Carlton tried to depict the outcome in a positive light, reassuring his master that ‘you are still rising and well on target for a serious leadership bid in about five years’ time.’<sup>419</sup> But the truth was that the Jenkinsites’ determination to punish Crosland for his ambivalence over Europe had prevailed over the latter’s hope that, by

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<sup>415</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 6/2 – ‘Thoughts at Salcombe, Xmas 1971’; Magee, ‘Tony Crosland’, p.187.

<sup>416</sup> Marquand, *Progressive Dilemma*, pp. 169-70.

<sup>417</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 6/2 – ‘Memo on C.A.R. Crosland’s options’, 12 April 1972; Press Statement, 17 April 1972.

<sup>418</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 6/2 – Letter: Eric Ogden to Anthony Crosland, 13 April 1972; Crosland, 19/3 – Susan Crosland’s journals, 20 April 1972.

<sup>419</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 6/2 – Letter: David Carlton to Anthony Crosland, 25 April 1972.

advocating a ‘centrist’, non-partisan line on the issue, he could form a new coalition in the PLP that would propel him to victory.

Crosland felt he had been badly treated during these episodes, referring to the Jenkinsite Europeans as an élitist, ‘bullying little clique’.<sup>420</sup> He was particularly suspicious of Bill Rodgers, Jenkins’s *consigliere* during the EEC debates, whom Susan Crosland in her diaries portrayed as a master of ‘emotional blackmail’ and the leader of the conspiracy against her husband.<sup>421</sup> Nonetheless, both Crosland and Jenkins were conscious as to how damaging their rift was becoming, and occasional attempts were made at reconciliation – albeit without success. At a dinner in November 1971 Jenkins soured their already tetchy relationship by insisting that it was he, and not Crosland, who was now the acknowledged leader of the right’, before accusing the latter of being ‘un-cooperative’ and motivated by ‘personal jealousy’. Jenkins’s suggestion that the two men could form a complementary partnership fell on deaf ears, and Crosland complained afterwards that ‘Roy has come actually to dislike socialism... As a Liberal or Conservative he might make a very good leader.’<sup>422</sup> Two years later, at a meeting in Italy, Rodgers tried to placate Dick Leonard, Crosland’s PPS (who had been retained by the latter due to his ‘close relations with Bill R.[odgers], David O.[wen], Phil W.[hitehead], etc.’<sup>423</sup>), by assuring him that the Jenkinsites would vote for Crosland in any forthcoming leadership election. Alas, Leonard’s response – which focused on the uncouth behaviour his master frequently had to endure – was not especially constructive.<sup>424</sup>

Following his defeat in the deputy leadership race Crosland chose to remain aloof from the factionalism that surrounded him. Although still ambitious for his own future

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<sup>420</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 19/3 – Susan Crosland’s journals, 7 December 1971.

<sup>421</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 19/3 – Susan Crosland’s journals, 25 February 1972; Crosland, 19/2 – Susan Crosland’s journals, 7 October 1971.

<sup>422</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 4/9 – ‘Dinner with RJ’, 18 November 1971; Crosland, *Tony Crosland*, p. 229.

<sup>423</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 6/2 – ‘Thoughts at Salcombe, Xmas 1971’.

<sup>424</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 6/2 – ‘Note on talk with Bill Rodgers in Italy’, 6 September 1973.

prospects, his lack of impact among the party faithful prevented him from cultivating a following in the manner of Jenkins, leaving aside those – such as Carlton, Leonard and Lipsey – who were already at his side. (One of the accusations made by Rodgers during their Italian *rendezvous* was that Crosland was unwilling to ‘work with colleagues who did not have an undivided personal loyalty to [him].’<sup>425</sup>) Instead, he persevered in trying to appeal directly to the party’s ‘solid majority’, seeking to position revisionism – and in particular, its emphasis on social justice – as a fulcrum that would balance out the extremists on either wing. Labour ‘has a Left-wing, yes, a Right-wing, yes; and – usually by far the biggest group – a Centre’, he reminded himself in 1973, ‘But almost always the unity of the Party far outweighs these differences. Vast majority of the Party shares the common dream of greater equality and a more classless society.’<sup>426</sup>

Crosland understood, however, that this, to some extent, involved marketing old wine in new bottles. But six years of disappointing Labour government had made that task a greater challenge than before, leading him to conclude that a systematic assessment of the kind found in *The Future of Socialism* was not feasible. At a party conference fringe meeting in 1971 he declared that there were no further original contributions he could make and that it was up to a ‘younger generation’ to develop ‘new ideas from the Social Democratic tradition.’<sup>427</sup> This uncharacteristic display of modesty was a red herring, but the hesitancy and weariness that permeated comments like these undoubtedly leached into much of his new work. In the introduction to *Socialism Now and Other Essays* (1974), his most sustained attempt to reassess the revisionist case, he admitted that he had undertaken the task of writing the book ‘in a tentative mood, wishing that someone better-equipped had undertaken it... I can offer only the practical thoughts of a practising and fully-occupied politician.’<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 6/2 – ‘Talk with Bill Rodgers’

<sup>426</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 13/24 – ‘Notes for Tonbridge Labour Party Speech’, 22 November 1973.

<sup>427</sup> Douglas Eden, ‘Colin Welch’s “Crosland”’, *Encounter*, June 1979.

<sup>428</sup> Crosland, *Socialism Now*, p. 15.

Moreover, he asserted from the outset that he would not reconsider any fundamental ethical principles: there was, he claimed, ‘no need for revisionists to revise our definition of socialism’.<sup>429</sup> Although recognising that Wilson’s first administration had ‘achieved less than we had hoped and certainly not enough to render our objectives obsolete’, he still claimed that there had been little wrong with its intentions and not enough in the way of recent socio-economic change – unlike the 1950s – to justify any such ‘fundamental rethinking’.<sup>430</sup>

So, if there was to be no major ideological revision, then what exactly did Crosland hope to achieve? His answer involved emphasising the need for *priorities* – if the ethics of social-democracy were indisputably in place, then (in true revisionist fashion) what mattered was to focus on practical means rather than ends, particularly those aspects that had remained neglected or unrealised. In policy terms, this meant cleaving to a welfarist position that sat firmly between what he saw as the market-driven orthodoxy of Jenkins and the anti-capitalist strategies of the hard left. Stressing the need to tackle ‘poverty, distress and social squalor’, Crosland advocated the further redistribution of wealth to ‘create a more just and humane society’, as well as cultivating a wider ideal of social equality that involved improving educational opportunities, health provision and housing.<sup>431</sup> Achieving this required an improvement in Britain’s relatively poor economic growth rate, which he identified as one of the biggest failures of the Wilson years. ‘We shall not get the allocation we want’, he had explained a few years previously, ‘without a certain view of taxation and public expenditure, and of social control and collective responsibility. And we shall not get that without a healthy rate of economic growth.’<sup>432</sup> By 1974 he had come to admit that this would be difficult, as

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<sup>429</sup> Crosland, *Socialism Now*, p. 15.

<sup>430</sup> Crosland, *Socialism Now*, p. 72.

<sup>431</sup> Crosland, *Socialism Now*, p. 71.

<sup>432</sup> Anthony Crosland, *A Social-Democratic Britain*, Fabian Tract 404 (London, 1971), p. 2.

‘British society – slow-moving, rigid, class-ridden – has proved much harder to change than was supposed’.<sup>433</sup>

The novelty of Crosland’s output lay not so much in the admission that *embourgeoisement* had faltered, but in the fact that he presented his existing belief in the primacy of equality (even above other revisionist ethics) within a new context. Having set out his landscape of ‘priorities’, they now became the basis for the explicitly populist tone that was to characterise his final years. In part a natural outcome of the anti-élitism he expressed during the European debates, this aspect of his egalitarian consciousness manifested itself in antipathy towards the educated bourgeoisie, whose enthusiasms he regarded as frivolous diversions for those comfortable enough not to worry about cost-of-living issues. He was especially sceptical of the recent additions to the Labour benches, arguing that – while impressive in their ‘vigour and idealism’ – they were excessively a college and university intake.<sup>434</sup> Echoing similar complaints made by Douglas Jay about the ‘Europeans’ (see chapter one), Crosland contended that this ‘new type of M.P.’ (who were mostly from the 1960s cohorts that Campbell described above) found ‘lib.[eral] issues, macro ec.[onomics], etc., more glamorous’ than the matters he was interested in.<sup>435</sup> In an article for the *Sunday Times* he insisted that Labour’s primary concern should be to tackle those issues ‘which most affect ordinary working-class people’, and resist the temptation to ‘seek the esteem of the liberal audience of columnists and television commentators, college graduates also, with essentially middle-class values, who... have seldom ventured out of the introverted world of central London into the rougher provincial world where most Labour voters live.’<sup>436</sup>

Crosland’s ‘hostility to metropolitan superficiality’, as Jeremy Nuttall describes it, therefore provided him with a useful schema for determining what should be ‘prioritised’ and

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<sup>433</sup> Crosland, *Socialism Now*, p. 44.

<sup>434</sup> Anthony Crosland, ‘Policies for the People, by the People’, *Socialist Commentary*, November 1971.

<sup>435</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 6/2 – ‘Thoughts at Salcombe, Xmas 1971’.

<sup>436</sup> *Sunday Times*, 4 April 1971.

what should be discarded – especially if the results elicited the ‘wrong’ response from middle-class liberals.<sup>437</sup> Comments he made on education in his *Sunday Times* article, for instance, betrayed an irritation at politicians who focused on the rights of university students whilst ignoring the wants of those less fortunate. A similar impulse led him to sympathise with the ‘real grievances’ that even ‘traditional Labour supporters’ believed had been ‘intensified’ by continued immigration, and to excoriate those whose instinctive reaction was to ‘condemn these voters as hopelessly and repulsively racist.’<sup>438</sup> Most controversial, however, was his criticism of the environmentalist movement. Although, as he asserted frequently, he understood the need to improve the environment, he did not believe it should come at the price of economic growth, which was needed to fund the public services his working-class constituents depended upon; hence his curdling disdain for the ‘doomwatch’ element of the environmentalist ‘anti-growth lobby’, which he argued was misanthropic, laden with a ‘manifest class bias’, and ‘indifferent to the needs of ordinary people’.<sup>439</sup> As a warning of what might happen if such sentiments gained the upper hand, Crosland highlighted the chaotic state of the Democrats in the United States, maintaining that the failure of George McGovern’s presidential campaign illustrated ‘the disaster which awaits a Leftwing party that divorces itself from its central tradition and its natural friends, and seems more concerned with fashionable middle-class issues than with the problems of its traditional supporters.’<sup>440</sup>

Not everyone took Crosland’s new direction at face value. The overt displays of loyalty to the Labourist ethos – especially his tendency to treat the views of his Grimsby constituents as somehow sacrosanct – seemed at odds with his status as a revisionist guru,

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<sup>437</sup> Jeremy Nuttall, ‘Tony Crosland and the Many Falls and Rises of British Social Democracy’, *Contemporary British History*, 18:4 (2007), p. 71.

<sup>438</sup> *Observer*, 21 January 1973.

<sup>439</sup> Crosland, *Social-Democratic Britain*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>440</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 13/24 – ‘News release’, 9 December 1972.

and were derided by fellow parliamentary colleagues as ‘inverted snobbery’ and an ‘over-zealous idealisation of working-class life.’<sup>441</sup> John Vaizey, a Gaitskellite who later ventured rightwards, argued that Crosland’s ‘exaggerated respect’ for Labour’s ‘humble monks and nuns’ was a consequence of the fact that, as an upper-middle class intellectual himself, he was not ‘born’ in the party.<sup>442</sup> Others felt his sensibilities had been aggravated by the urge to distinguish himself from Jenkins, the great liberal crusader who had been responsible for introducing divorce and homosexual law reforms, and many Jenkinsites were annoyed by his inference that they were an unfeeling, self-absorbed coterie, indifferent to voters’ concerns. Jenkins himself, although refraining from any direct criticism, spent much of 1972 in an anti-populist frame of mind, advancing the claims of parliamentary democracy by militating against the proposed referendum on the EEC (see chapter two). Writing in *Socialist Commentary*, he argued that populism ‘cannot possibly be equated with democracy’, and that its adherents, by seeking to position themselves as tribunes of the people, ended up ‘appealing to their superficial reactions, to the prejudices of the moment, to their worse rather than their better instinct’.<sup>443</sup>

If Jenkins and his admirers questioned the value of Crosland’s reaction to the changing dynamics of British politics then, at this stage at least, they were less certain as to what their counter-response should be. The opaque nature of Jenkins’s own politics was part of that conundrum, for he showed a marked disinclination to grapple with the details necessary to elucidate any kind of political strategy. This is understood even by sympathetic onlookers to have been one of his gravest defects. Stefan Collini, for example, identified him as harbouring a ‘distaste for general ideas’, while his biographer John Campbell concluded that ‘Others may intellectualize what social democracy is. Jenkins will not be drawn’, adding

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<sup>441</sup> Kevin Jefferys, *Anthony Crosland* (London, 2000), p. 148.

<sup>442</sup> John Vaizey, ‘C.A.R. Crosland’, *Encounter*, August 1977.

<sup>443</sup> Roy Jenkins, ‘Principles, Not Populism’, *Socialist Commentary*, November 1972.

that his political philosophy amounted to no more than '[solving] the problems of the moment by the application of enlightened common sense, to make people happier. This anti-intellectualism, in an extremely clever man, has puzzled the commentators and political analysts'.<sup>444</sup> Perhaps this was curious, but not to Jenkins. As he somewhat guilelessly admitted to Crosland at their rancorous dinner in 1971, 'I'm much better at tactics, you're much better at policy.'<sup>445</sup>

Yet if Crosland's *leitmotif* was 'priorities', for Jenkins it was a matter of 'principles'. He may have had no detailed plan for how revisionism could be reformed, but that did not stop him from entertaining a clear, if rather intuitive, vision of what a well-governed, progressive polity should look like. These 'civilised' ideals were expressed in a series of speeches he gave in 1972, which were collected and published later that year under the title *What Matters Now*. Drafted mostly by his research assistant Matthew Oakeshott and David Marquand's wife Judith, they addressed several different themes, from regional policy to Third World aid. The most important concerned what he dubbed the 'call to idealism', which allowed him to explore the 'challenge of injustice' and the role the Labour movement had in tackling it: 'In spite of half a century of effort', he proclaimed, 'our society... is disfigured by gross unfairness which, without constant correction, feeds strongly upon itself.'<sup>446</sup> But despite conceding that poor economic growth had hampered progress, he remained committed to the idea that contemporary society had the tools to rectify this 'miasma of hopelessness'. National governments, he claimed, 'ought to be able to remove the abuses of remaining poverty within approximately its present resources'; the problem, as he saw it, was their performance both past and present, rather than their values or intentions.<sup>447</sup> Indeed, the

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<sup>444</sup> Stefan Collini, 'Le Roi Jean Quinze', *London Review of Books*, 5 June 2014; John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins* (New York, 1983), p. 61.

<sup>445</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 4/9 – 'Dinner with RJ', 18 November 1971.

<sup>446</sup> Jenkins, *What Matters Now*, p. 12.

<sup>447</sup> Jenkins, *What Matters Now*, p. 20.

abiding characteristic of *What Matters Now* was its optimism: the persistence of injustice was not a reason for social-democrats to despair but a ‘challenge to be overcome’, something that was happening in a world already casting off the deferential values of a previous age.<sup>448</sup>

Despite the difference in tone, Jenkins’s thinking on these issues was at this stage not that far removed from the gospel Crosland was preaching. Both men remained socially egalitarian revisionists of the mind, prizing the necessity of reform and recoiling from absolutist or irrational positions. They were still committed to the mixed economy model and remained unconvinced by the merits of wholesale nationalisation, with Crosland reminding his readers in *Socialism Now* that ‘Governments do not always see the public interest so much more clearly than private firms.’<sup>449</sup> Furthermore, even though Jenkins repudiated populism as a strategy it did not mean that he or his ideals conformed to the aloof caricature so beloved by his opponents: as Nuttall observes, throughout *What Matters Now* he balanced his preference for enlightened Westminster rule with a belief in the ‘underlying good political sense of the people’, trusting them to make the right decisions if provided with the appropriate framework in which to do so.<sup>450</sup> In a speech in October 1972 he reiterated that ‘with an effective lead’ the country would be prepared to accept progressive policies and reject ‘opportunism’.<sup>451</sup> What’s more, Crosland too was able to subvert his ‘anti-élitist’ self-image: his perception that working-class people were not inherently progressive (or even ‘political’) prompted him to supply Jenkinsite reasoning as a caveat to his own arguments, warning his readers that following ‘every whim and fad of public prejudice’ would mean the restoration of capital punishment and a ‘Powellite policy on race’, which he condemned as ‘unacceptable to any Social Democrat.’<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> Jenkins, *What Matters Now*, p. 17.

<sup>449</sup> Crosland, *Socialism Now*, p. 39.

<sup>450</sup> Jeremy Nuttall, ‘Roy Jenkins and the Politics of Radical Moderation’, *History*, 104 (2019), p. 702.

<sup>451</sup> Jenkins, ‘Principles, Not Populism’.

<sup>452</sup> *Sunday Times*, 4 April 1971.

Where Jenkins did depart from Crosland was in his belief in pluralism and freedom as necessary ingredients for social-democratic revival, rather than just simply relying on further avowals of equality. ‘Men and women of goodwill’ could no longer trust in ‘class loyalties of the traditional kind’, he said, but had to rekindle their ‘latent idealism’; this would only happen if the two major parties became more tolerant, co-operative and broad-based, and sought to escape from ‘narrow and self-defeating sectionalism’.<sup>453</sup> His remark that ‘one of the main tasks of the democratic left is to widen the area of human choice’ indicated how much he was also coming to realign his egalitarian credentials with a deepening appreciation of personal liberty.<sup>454</sup> What he rallied against was not Crosland’s convictions as such, but the ‘mechanical, labourist politics’ they seemed to support, which he believed had crowded out an alternative, more idealistic conception of the good society.<sup>455</sup> His speeches often made him sound like a Tawneyite ethical socialist, whereas Crosland – who once yearned for a world of spiritual as well as material enrichment – increasingly appeared as a believer in the merits of centralised state bureaucracy. Unfortunately, while Jenkins remained on the Labour frontbench he neglected to develop his leanings towards social liberalism into a sustained argument, but his sensibilities were persuasive, and it was only a matter of time before the more energetic of his followers were to take up the challenge.

### **Callaghan’s succession and the end of Croslandite revisionism**

When the Labour Party returned to power in February 1974 it was without a commanding majority. The party’s manifesto was regarded as much more left-wing than what had come

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<sup>453</sup> Jenkins, *What Matters Now*, pp. 21-2.

<sup>454</sup> Jenkins, *What Matters Now*, p. 14.

<sup>455</sup> Nuttall, ‘Roy Jenkins’, p. 699.

before, but its leading figures in government were still predominantly of a 'moderate' stamp. Crosland retained the environment portfolio (which he had previously held while in the Shadow Cabinet), while Jenkins – who had hoped to become either Chancellor or Foreign Secretary, returned to the Home Office, where he had been stationed from 1965 to 1967. The dominant personality in Cabinet was arguably the Chancellor, Denis Healey, whom Jenkins memorably described as carrying 'light ideological baggage on a heavy gun carriage.'<sup>456</sup> Wilson's decision to revisit the polls later that year, although it increased the Government's majority, did not rekindle his appetite for the exhausting task of keeping a fractious party together, and in March 1976 he announced his resignation. An election was then held among the PLP to choose who would become both party leader and Prime Minister. Now viewed nostalgically as one of the greatest concentrations of talent fielded in any internal party election, six ministers put their names forward: four of them – Jenkins, Crosland, Healey and James Callaghan – were identifiably 'moderate', each fighting to become the principal challenger to whomever of Michael Foot or Tony Benn emerged as the candidate from the left.

Of those four, it was Jenkins who was identified as the candidate with potentially the greatest traction outside of the party and – beyond his own faction – among the least within it. The man himself was aware of this, and throughout the campaign he tried to reach out beyond his metropolitan circle, holding events in his Birmingham constituency and successfully attracting the endorsement of several right-wingers from 'traditional' backgrounds, such as 'James White, the old anti-abortionist from Glasgow, and Dan Jones from Burnley', who apparently warmed to him on the basis of his election-winning capabilities.<sup>457</sup> As he later admitted, this encouraged his campaign's lieutenants to become

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<sup>456</sup> Jenkins, *Life at the Centre*, p. 617.

<sup>457</sup> WES, Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 53 – Dictated journals, 1976, p. 20

‘far too optimistic’ about their chances of success: for every MP lured from outside the ‘most committed inner-circle’ there were others, like Ernest Armstrong, who could not vote for him because of his perceived hostility to Labourism (‘[Armstrong] thought I would be the best leader, but would the party hold under me?’).<sup>458</sup> At the first ballot on 25 March Jenkins came behind Foot and Callaghan with just 56 votes – six fewer than his own ‘best estimate’, and far less than the 68 which his lieutenants believed he had gathered or the 80+ that they had initially projected.<sup>459</sup> This was a humiliation for the Jenkinsite right: they had banked on edging ahead of Callaghan to emerge as the leading ‘social-democratic’ candidate. Analysing the result, Christopher Hitchens and Peter Kellner argue that Jenkins’s ‘fervently pro-Market’ stance ultimately denied him ‘all but a handful of neutral and anti-Market votes’; only seven of the 227 MPs not perceived as ‘passionate pro-Marketeers’ were reckoned to have voted for him, as opposed to 41 of the 90 who were classed as such.<sup>460</sup>

If Jenkins’s excessive optimism and crushing defeat was in some respects analogous to Crosland’s trajectory during the deputy leadership race four years earlier, then the latter’s own campaign in 1976 was an even more dismal affair than last time around. Despite initially protesting his ambivalence about becoming Prime Minister, Crosland announced his candidacy with seemingly little idea of its viability, although according to Kevin Jefferys ‘much agonising’ had taken place before the decision was made.<sup>461</sup> There was some goodwill from sympathetic commentators, such as Peter Jenkins, who thought that Crosland’s ability and ‘cloth-cap Grimbarian style’ could make him an acceptable ‘unity’ candidate.<sup>462</sup> This was (unsurprisingly) the line that Crosland’s campaign decided to take, contacting wavering MPs to inform them of his ‘idealistic’ and ‘realistic’ qualities, ‘strong commitment to socialism’,

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<sup>458</sup> WES, Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 53 – Dictated journals, 1976, pp. 19-20

<sup>459</sup> WES, Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 53 – Dictated journals, 1976, pp. 19, 24;

<sup>460</sup> Peter Kellner and Christopher Hitchens, *Callaghan: The Road to Number Ten* (London, 1976), p. 171.

<sup>461</sup> Jefferys, *Anthony Crosland*, p. 188.

<sup>462</sup> *Guardian*, 17 March 1976.

and intention to lead the party from the centre and not from the right.<sup>463</sup> But his status as an unfancied outsider, with little name-recognition outside of the PLP, soon proved insurmountable, although coming last with just 17 votes was a worse result than either he or his advisers had dared predict.<sup>464</sup> Described by one of their number, George Cunningham, as a collection of ‘screwballs and crackpots’, the forlorn group of Croslandite diehards in the PLP undoubtedly represented a wide spectrum of party opinion, albeit in microcosm: alongside a few ‘soft’ left-wingers there were four MPs from the anti-EEC right who were assumed to have voted for him (including Cunningham and Peter Hardy, who had replaced Dick Leonard as Crosland’s PPS), but the belated attempt by the campaign to encourage defections from the Jenkinsites failed, with only one pro-Market intellectual revisionist (Bryan Magee) joining them.<sup>465</sup>

Jenkins withdrew from the contest after his poor showing, and with Crosland eliminated only Callaghan and Healey remained to hold the right-wing banner aloft. The latter was accused by Jenkins of purloining several of his supporters, but Healey’s decision to fight on despite an unimpressive vote was fuelled by bravado rather than realism, and in the penultimate ballot he came bottom of the poll. Callaghan was left facing Michael Foot in the final round, where he took the majority of Healey’s supporters to usher in a convincing victory. Hitchens and Kellner have characterised Callaghan’s route to the leadership as one of canniness leavened with an instinctive understanding of the party’s *esprit de corps*. ‘Jim cares about the Labour movement’, they quoted one ‘ministerial enthusiast’ as saying, ‘Those dreary committee rooms, the bad teas, the duplicating machines that get ink everywhere, the old ladies writing notices with exasperating slowness. Jim *likes* all that.’<sup>466</sup> Callaghan

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<sup>463</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 6/4 – Letter: Bruce Douglas-Mann to Betty Boothroyd, 22 March 1976.

<sup>464</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 19/4 – Susan Crosland’s journals, 22 March 1976.

<sup>465</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 19/4 – Susan Crosland’s journals, 22 March 1976; Crosland, 6/4 – List of likely supporters, 8 April 1976.

<sup>466</sup> Kellner and Hitchens, *Callaghan*, p. 177.

assiduously cultivated support among trade union sponsored representatives and the delegations from Yorkshire and the Celtic ‘fringe’, while his general reputation as a Cabinet heavyweight of pragmatic sensibility ensured him a good reception from unlikely quarters; by the second ballot he was reputed to have even gathered the votes of several figures from the ‘non-Tribune’ left.<sup>467</sup> All of this helped to achieve a result that Callaghan’s biographer Kenneth Morgan approvingly describes as a ‘perfect model of traditional Labour’, although Hitchens and Kellner rebuked him for using his lack of any defined political philosophy to his advantage – by saying nothing that would cause division he became the reluctant choice for those whose main preoccupation was to stop Foot from becoming leader.<sup>468</sup>

Callaghan’s triumph, incorporating as it did elements of both the non-partisan, capable style used by Jenkins and the Labourist, ‘common ground’ strategy of Crosland, presented a challenge to both camps. Many Jenkinsites were openly disoriented at their leader’s failure to proceed further: one of them, Roger Liddle, having felt that the arguments in Jenkins’s favour were ‘overwhelming’, described the result of the first ballot as a ‘great shock’.<sup>469</sup> Being defeated by Callaghan must have unnerved Jenkins, who had always viewed the new Prime Minister rather uncharitably (once describing him to Richard Crossman as combining ‘a powerful political personality with so little intelligence’).<sup>470</sup> Bored by the demands of the Home Office, he was soon alarming those around him by threatening to exit British politics altogether if Callaghan did not give him the job he coveted, that of Foreign Secretary.<sup>471</sup> The reaction of Crosland’s team to Callaghan’s ascendancy was, however, somewhat different. Although similarly unimpressed by the intellectual qualities of the winning side – Dick Leonard, in a post-election memorandum, pronounced the

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<sup>467</sup> Peter Kellner, ‘Anatomy of the Vote’, *New Statesman*, 9 April 1976.

<sup>468</sup> Kenneth Morgan, *Callaghan: A Life* (Oxford, 1997), p. 474; Kellner and Hitchens, *Callaghan*, pp. 169, 173

<sup>469</sup> WES, Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 113 – Letter: Roger Liddle to Roy Jenkins, 27 March 1976.

<sup>470</sup> Crossman, *Diaries*, Vol. 3, p. 627.

<sup>471</sup> WES, Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 113 – Letter: Dick Douglas to Roy Jenkins, 17 April 1976.

‘Callaghanites’ to be ‘the least imaginative members of the PLP’ – they espied an opportunity for advancement that could not be missed.<sup>472</sup> Crosland had already agreed beforehand to ‘give his votes to Jim’ rather than Jenkins (privately, as he did not wish to antagonise those Jenkinsites ‘who do not already hate me’) in the hope that the favour would be rewarded, while Callaghan, in return, appreciated his ministerial abilities, ‘reckless devil-may-care attitude’, and support during the 1963 leadership race.<sup>473</sup> Their good relationship contrasted with the lukewarm attitude Callaghan held towards Jenkins, and when the time came to decide on his Cabinet it was Crosland – despite the latter’s lack of front-rank experience – who was chosen to succeed him at the Foreign Office.

This decision had an immediate impact, as it left Jenkins with no option – given his earlier ultimatum – but to leave parliament and take up an offer from the European Commission to become its next president, beginning in 1977. Crosland’s parliamentary career had thus been saved from ignominy at the expense of his rival, and one could be forgiven for assuming that his brand of political philosophy would also benefit. Certainly, the trajectories of Croslandite revisionism and Callaghanite Labourism, with their shared devotion to the party and respect for working-class culture, had converged – a symbiosis of revisionism and traditionalism that David Marquand considers was ‘nicely symbolised’ by Crosland’s appointment.<sup>474</sup> And yet Callaghan’s short premiership did more to frustrate the prospects of post-war social-democracy than anything the Conservative Party had hitherto managed. He was always an orthodox, indeed conservative-minded politician, who set great faith in his ability to intuit popular feeling and the ‘realities’ of any given situation; and while this entailed a ‘consolidatory’ position on party matters it paradoxically left him willing to entertain more radical solutions when confronting the nation’s economic woes. These

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<sup>472</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 6/4 – ‘Memo on Leadership Direction’, 1 June 1976.

<sup>473</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 19/4 – Susan Crosland’s journals, 22 March 1976; Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, p. 400.

<sup>474</sup> Marquand, *Progressive Dilemma*, p. 170.

problems had been steadily building up since Labour's return to government, and included an inflation spiral, catalysed by the oil crisis of 1973 and exacerbated by wage demands, ever-growing public expenditure, and increasingly high levels of borrowing. The growing discontent that emerged from this gathering storm encouraged him to go beyond traditional Keynesian palliatives and towards incorporating elements of what is now known as the 'neoliberal' economic model.

The first indication of Callaghan's change in thinking came at the party conference in September 1976, five months after his election. There he delivered a speech that, in its warnings about the unsustainability of the public finances, contained the rudiments of what Morgan calls a 'modified monetarism'.<sup>475</sup> One of those asked by Callaghan to contribute to his speech was his son-in-law Peter Jay, who – as we have seen in chapter three – was already trying to conceive of a doctrine that could combine the egalitarian virtues of socialism with market rigour. Jay's impatience with what he derisively called the 'Keynes-Crosland system' led him to critique the expectation that demand management and expansion of the money supply could always 'head off an incipient rise in unemployment' without adversarial effects on the nation's finances.<sup>476</sup> Such underlying pessimism, a feature of his *Times* columns for a number of years<sup>477</sup>, was succinctly expressed in a passage of the speech that, as Callaghan wryly remarked, 'made the fur fly':

We used to think that you could spend your way out of a recession and increase employment by cutting taxes and boosting Government spending. I can tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists, and that insofar as it ever did exist, it only

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<sup>475</sup> Morgan, *Callaghan*, p. 507.

<sup>476</sup> CAC, PJAY, 4/4/17 – Letter: Peter Jay to Fred Hirsch, 25 March 1977; Jay, 'Employment, Inflation and Politics', p. 16.

<sup>477</sup> See, for example, *Times*, 7 May 1973.

worked on each occasion since the war by injecting a bigger dose of inflation into the economy, followed by a higher level of unemployment as the next step.<sup>478</sup>

In Jay's view, taming the 'Scylla and Charybdis of 'stop-and-go', boom-and-bust, crisis unemployment and crisis inflation' required introducing a necessary degree of fiscal and market discipline to return the economy to solvency.<sup>479</sup> His adoption of Hayekian and monetarist solutions allowed him to make three general prescriptions: first, that labour costs must be lowered to make Britain competitive; second, that productivity must be improved and the right kind of investment attained; and, most importantly, that the money supply should be carefully monitored to prevent the country living 'beyond its means'.

Received in silence by the party faithful, the speech has since been viewed as presaging the Thatcherite assault on the welfare state. Callaghan, in his autobiography, unsurprisingly resisted this interpretation, protesting that the Conservatives turned a pragmatic statement made 'in the circumstances of 1976' into one that justified their subsequent 'malefactions' in office.<sup>480</sup> Indeed, Jay's contribution can only be understood in the context of his wider ambition to marry free-market liberalism with a socialism fit for the post-Keynesian age, aspects of which he attempted to outline in another – rejected – draft of the speech.<sup>481</sup> But the harsh solutions he proffered, combined with the Prime Minister's eagerness to maintain economic prudence, were a grave blow to those who championed the political economy of the existing 'consensus'. The Chancellor, although less convinced than Callaghan by Jay's input, soon followed a similar line. At the time the conference was taking place the value of sterling had dropped to just over \$1.60 to the pound, to the point where the Bank of England was spending substantial reserves to hold it up. Healey responded by

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<sup>478</sup> Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, pp. 425-6.

<sup>479</sup> Jay, *An Unfinished Life*, p. 207.

<sup>480</sup> Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, p. 427.

<sup>481</sup> Jay, *An Unfinished Life*, p. 237.

applying for a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which was explained to the Cabinet as necessary for the Government to reassure the international financial community. Following several subsequent devaluations, on 22 November Healey outlined his conditions for accepting the loan: in return for a £3.9 billion package, he would cut £3 billion from the public spending borrowing requirement (PSBR) over the next two years and agree to 'manage' the money supply.<sup>482</sup>

The politics of the so-called IMF 'crisis' were complex, and transcended the party's traditional ideological boundaries. Crosland emerged as one of the senior ministers most opposed to all but minor concessions in return for the loan. He reasoned that there was no economic case for reductions of that magnitude, a viewpoint backed in the Cabinet by all on the left, such as Foot and Tony Benn, but also by a number of revisionists, including Roy Hattersley and Harold Lever.<sup>483</sup> This was a convincing majority, even though it included those (like Shirley Williams) whose main concern was to defend their department's budgets from cutbacks; it did, however, have the unfortunate effect of entrenching the right's divisions, as both Reg Prentice and Edmund Dell chose to back the plan from the outset. Crosland argued that smaller cuts could be made which would offset the Treasury's enthusiasm for accepting the IMF hairshirt, and together with Hattersley he devised an import deposits scheme that would reduce the Government's borrowing requirement by one billion pounds. On 29 November he authored a memorandum to Cabinet setting out his objections: as well as reiterating the threat to investment and full employment from excessive fiscal retrenchment, he emphasised the danger that deflationary pressure would pose to the survival of the social contract and the possibility that the loan would harm rather than restore market confidence. Crosland also sought to reinforce optimism in the Government's original

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<sup>482</sup> NA, CAB, 129/193/1 – 'IMF Negotiations', 22 November 1976.

<sup>483</sup> Bernard Donoghue, *Downing Street Diary, Volume 2* (London, 2008), p. 110.

strategy, attacking Jay's (and now Healey's) monetarism by maintaining that 'on present policies we shall be living within our means by late 1977 or early 1978', and arguing that the Government's bargaining position was strong enough to force the IMF into issuing a loan on *any* terms.<sup>484</sup>

Given his reputation as a cerebral heavyweight, it was conceivable that Crosland could have prevailed against Healey's determination to force his deflationary package through. Yet, just four days after issuing his communique he performed a *volte-face* at the next Cabinet meeting, assenting to the terms in principle. Why had this reversal happened so quickly? Callaghan, who had remained aloof from the fray before coming down in favour of Healey, claimed that the negotiations with the IMF had resulted in a level of cuts at around half of what had originally been demanded, convincing wavering ministers such as Williams to fall in line. Although remaining 'absolutely unconvinced by the economic arguments which had been used', Crosland understood that there was little point in battling the Chancellor when the Prime Minister was now by his side, and feared that if word spread of a lingering anti-IMF tendency in the Cabinet then it would not only depress confidence in the currency markets but would 'smash up the party'.<sup>485</sup> Criticised by Peter Shore for capitulating to the 'indefensible', Crosland and his allies found succour in the fact that, by holding out for so long, they put pressure on the IMF to modify its terms. (As Jefferys notes, they could also point to the subsequent vindication of their suspicions about the borrowing requirement, which ended up lower than anticipated.<sup>486</sup>)

A less flattering explanation for Crosland's turnaround, however, is that in placing such importance on rescuing the *status quo ante* he had little defence when faced with an answer that took into account the need for abrupt change, however unappealing. The

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<sup>484</sup> NA, CAB, 129/193/8 – 'Economic Strategy – The IMF', 29 November 1976.

<sup>485</sup> Crosland, *Tony Crosland*, p. 382.

<sup>486</sup> Jefferys, *Anthony Crosland*, pp. 215-6.

intellectual exhaustion hinted at in *Socialism Now* had by now become visible to others: Bernard Donoughue, one of Callaghan's advisers, remarked in his diary that Crosland 'seemed tired and without any drive', relying on David Lipsey for detailed arguments, while Dell believed that throughout the negotiations he had been 'demolished by the facts'.<sup>487</sup> Their criticism, although partial, illustrates how Crosland's inability to move from his favoured position left him unable to rally others to his position. Although he did try to form a temporary alliance with the left – and was more than willing to criticise the IMF as a capitalist body whose diktat was intolerable to a socialist government – he could not join them in supporting Benn's attempt to harness the anti-deflationists' critique to the Alternative Economic Strategy, whose repudiation of Keynesian principles Crosland had always found unconvincing.<sup>488</sup> But he was unable to secure a *rapprochement* with the Cabinet's outspoken 'moderates' either, lashing out uncomprehendingly at both Dell ('in a very reactionary state of mind') and Prentice ('mad') rather than engaging with their objections.<sup>489</sup> The result, as Brian Walden told him during the leadership contest, was that his image remained 'blurred' in a way that separated him from the changing ways of both the left and the right, leaving him forlornly defending a world order that seemed to be moving increasingly towards obsolescence.<sup>490</sup>

### Revisionists revise, part one: The Manifesto Group

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<sup>487</sup> Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary, Volume 2*, p. 99; Edmund Dell, *A Hard Pounding: Politics and Economic Crisis, 1974-76* (Oxford, 1991), p. 271.

<sup>488</sup> In one of his notebook entries for 1975 Crosland described the 'Benn-Holland ind. policy' as 'half-baked'. See David Reisman, *Crosland's Future: Opportunity and Outcome* (London, 1997), p. 14n.

<sup>489</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 19/4 – Susan Crosland's journals, undated [November 1976].

<sup>490</sup> BLPES, Crosland, 19/4 – Susan Crosland's journals, undated [March 1976].

Crosland's acceptance of the IMF loan, argues Geoff Horn, was 'clearly a victory for a new realism on the Labour Right and spelt final defeat for [his] revisionist strategy'. Radhika Desai agrees, maintaining that the crisis 'shattered any remaining illusions' about the viability of Croslandite egalitarianism in the party.<sup>491</sup> In fact, the episode was not as transformative as has often been supposed: Alec Cairncross and Kathleen Burk, writing in 1992, found that apart from the imposition of monetary targets (which, as they noted, were 'rarely hit'), the IMF's deflationary policies did not last, and once economic recovery gathered pace the Chancellor reversed many cuts and raised the PBSR threshold, so much so that it was back above £9 billion by 1978–9.<sup>492</sup> But the fact remained that the preconditions of Croslandite political thought – rising public expenditure, progressive taxation and full employment – were seemingly unattainable in an age when galloping inflation and low growth were the main problems. No one else on the right seemed able to provide a solution, an impression that was hastened after Crosland's unfortunate death in February 1977. Many of the press testimonials reported his passing by dwelling on the lack of intellectual ability in the party. James Fenton of the *New Statesman* reported that 'the immediate reaction in Westminster was – who on earth was going to replace him?' The gap Crosland had left was of 'historic significance', he claimed, with few 'heirs of Gaitskell' left in the running now that Jenkins had departed for Brussels.<sup>493</sup> The *Sunday Times*, meanwhile, ran an article on the remaining moderates in the Cabinet with the title 'Who are the Thinkers Now?' Appraising the claims of Hattersley, Dell, Williams and Bill Rodgers among others, its author drew a

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<sup>491</sup> Geoff Horn, 'Crosland's Socialism: A History of the British Labour Party's Revisionist Tradition, 1951-81', unpublished PhD thesis, London Metropolitan University (2006), p. 223; Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism*, p. 173.

<sup>492</sup> Alec Cairncross and Kathleen Burk, *'Goodbye Great Britain': The 1976 IMF Crisis* (New Haven, 1992), p. 228.

<sup>493</sup> James Fenton, 'Labour Without Crosland', *New Statesman*, 18 February 1977.

blank, finding that none of them were able to raise their sights beyond the quotidian minutiae of government affairs.<sup>494</sup>

But then, as Crosland's career had already shown, occupying a ministerial position was not necessarily the best vantage point for reappraising one's political philosophy. Many right-wingers had already decided to look beyond the Government's ranks by investing their hopes in the Manifesto Group, an organisation established by several backbench MPs soon after the October 1974 general election. The Group's impetus came from the success of the Tribune Group, which shortly after the earlier February election had won the chairmanship of the PLP by backing the candidacy of the veteran Bevanite Ian Mikardo against two moderate candidates who cancelled each other out. The result enraged social-democrats like Dickson Mabon, who saw Mikardo's success as symbolic of the ground the right had ceded to the left while in opposition: 'We realised we had now lost control', he later divulged to Dianne Hayter, 'So we said, all right, now let's do it.'<sup>495</sup> The name of the Group was apparently inspired by James Wellbeloved's comment that the October election manifesto was 'as far as we're prepared to bloody well go!', but it was also (perhaps unconsciously) redolent of the early years of the CDS, which was originally organised as the 'Labour Manifesto Group' in honour of the statement its founders had made in support of Hugh Gaitskell back in 1960.<sup>496</sup> Mabon recalled that the new incarnation's first meetings were informal, with only certain unnamed 'usual suspects' in attendance – there was, he said, 'No structure. No treasurer. No sec[retary]. No money. [We] Just met.'<sup>497</sup> Soon, however, officers were elected to fill the void: Mabon himself became chairman, John Horam secretary, and Neville Sandelson began a lengthy stint as treasurer.

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<sup>494</sup> *Sunday Times*, 20 February 1977.

<sup>495</sup> Quoted in Hayter, *Fightback!*, p. 51.

<sup>496</sup> Cited in Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism*, p. 171; BLPES, Crosland, 6/1 – London Manifesto Group meeting minutes, 16 November 1960.

<sup>497</sup> LHASC, Hayter – Dickson Mabon interview (3 July 2002).

Given its focus on arresting the progress of the left, the Manifesto Group's activities were often dedicated to manoeuvring leading right-wingers into positions of influence, and within weeks of its foundation it had achieved a notable success when Cledwyn Hughes, one of its founders, defeated Mikardo in a rerun of the PLP chairmanship ballot soon after the October election. Perhaps buoyed by this counter-offensive, over 60 backbench MPs had officially joined the Group by the following year; when one adds sympathetic ministers (who were prohibited from joining) to that count then its true strength in the PLP was even greater, perhaps as many as 80 MPs.<sup>498</sup> The membership was celebrated by Sandelson as 'representing many different strands of party opinion and socialist thinking'; and indeed, although a large number of supporters hailed from the Jenkinsite faction, many of Crosland's most prominent allies, including the anti-Marketeters Bruce Douglas-Mann and Ken Weetch, were also involved, while there was yet another contingent who had marshalled behind Callaghan in the leadership election.<sup>499</sup> However, as Hayter mentions, this was 'not an efficient marshalling of forces', which was complicated still further by the fact that some members had tried to pacify the activists in their CLPs by opting for Michael Foot as leader instead.<sup>500</sup>

Sandelson's emphasis on 'socialist thinking' within the Group hinted at its potential once its members went beyond simply opposing the left. An early indication of the possibilities that lay ahead came when the organisational committee registered with the PLP: publishing a list of chosen 'objectives' in support of their application, one was that the Group 'should act as a forum for constructive discussion designed to relate democratic socialist philosophy to the needs of the present age'.<sup>501</sup> Despite the scepticism of observers such as

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<sup>498</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 6/1 – List of Manifesto Group members, 1975. The full of list of members can be found in Appendix 2.

<sup>499</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 6/1 – List of Manifesto Group members, 1975; Letter to the press, 9 July 1975.

<sup>500</sup> Hayter, *Fightback!*, p. 54.

<sup>501</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 6/1 – Organisational Committee party registration cover letter, undated.

Hayter – who maintains that these ‘lofty aims’ were a sideshow to the real task of organising anti-Tribune ‘slates’ in further internal elections – there were clearly enough ‘thinkers’ in the Group to pursue matters in this direction.<sup>502</sup> But these aspirations had to be balanced alongside another of the committee’s objectives – namely, ‘to work for the implementation of the policies set out in the Labour manifesto and to support the Labour government in overcoming the country’s acute economic difficulties.’<sup>503</sup> While understandable in the context of resisting the advances of the left, this open declaration of loyalty clearly had the potential to conflict with any plans to ‘modernise’ revisionism, especially when it risked undermining the Government’s record.

The election of Callaghan as party leader arguably brought these considerations out into the open. The new prime minister, who took a dim view of minorities in the PLP that sought to ‘foist their views on the party as a whole’, immediately asked the Group to disband, leading Mabon to retort that this would only happen if the Tribunites dissolved themselves first.<sup>504</sup> Many members had militated against Callaghan during the leadership campaign and were right to be nervous, but even those who favoured the new régime worried that his antipathy towards the Group would stymie their chances of promotion (the *Times* journalist Geoffrey Smith wrote that Callaghan’s preference for pragmatic, non-doctrinaire right-wingers when forming his administration had already angered those with a more idealistic conception of politics).<sup>505</sup> All of this might have fostered resistance rather than compliance, but the new Government’s flirtation with monetarism also opened up the alternative possibility that the Group could, if adept enough, solve their inherent ideological dilemma by remaining ‘loyal’ to ‘Labour policy’ whilst entertaining ideas that went beyond standard revisionist formulae.

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<sup>502</sup> Hayter, *Fightback!*, p. 54.

<sup>503</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 6/1 – Organisational Committee party registration cover letter, undated.

<sup>504</sup> *Times*, 22 April 1976.

<sup>505</sup> *Times*, 22 April 1976.

Perhaps sensing that the time was now ripe, the Group tried to clarify its approach by publishing in March 1977 a pamphlet with the commanding title *What We Must Do: A Democratic Socialist Approach to Britain*. Described by Stephen Meredith as an ‘initial statement of philosophy and policy’, it discussed contemporary socio-economic issues alongside ‘the development and direction of social democracy more generally.’<sup>506</sup> The committee responsible for writing it was a roll-call of the Oxbridge-educated revisionist intelligentsia – Marquand, Mackintosh and Magee all provided input, together with the likes of Giles Radice, John Horam and John Roper. They presented a damning indictment of the state of the nation, arguing that Britain had not sufficiently modernised herself to deal with present-day challenges. ‘Our main failing’, they stated, ‘is a profound resistance to change’, which had created a ‘backward-looking national psychology’ characterised by ‘a curious mixture of defensiveness and complacency’.<sup>507</sup> This state of arrested development, they claimed, had over time exacted a grave toll on both the economy and society. The ‘great producer groups’ in the private and public sectors, together with the equally powerful unions in industry, stood accused of irresponsibly wielding power in a way that was ‘deeply conservative’ and ‘a barrier to... high-growth rates’, foiling efforts from governments of both hues to safeguard the public interest by checking their privileges.<sup>508</sup> They had also conspired to ensure the survival of class antagonism, which – ‘in spite of decades of progressive taxation and diminishing economic inequality’ – had left Britain as ‘two nations’ divided by an antediluvian ‘us-versus-them’ attitude, frustrating the co-operation necessary to avoid further economic stagnation.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> Stephen Meredith, ‘Rethinking Revisionist Social Democracy: The Case of the Manifesto Group and the 1970s Third Way’, *Labour History Review*, 79:2 (2015), p. 213.

<sup>507</sup> Manifesto Group, *What We Must Do: A Democratic Socialist Approach to Britain* (London, 1977), p. 7.

<sup>508</sup> Manifesto Group, *What We Must Do*, p. 8

<sup>509</sup> Manifesto Group, *What We Must Do*, p. 8-9

The authors demanded that any future social-democratic settlement must be based on ‘coherent and hard-headed’ strategic thinking, rather than the traditionally British solution of ‘muddling through’. Retaining their focus on economic policy, they alleged that ‘democratic socialism’ had become too reliant on existing Keynesian models of growth, leading to the Croslandite paradigm of high levels of taxation and government expenditure with ‘too little regard for overall cost and too optimistic a view of the likely benefits.’<sup>510</sup> Social-democracy, the authors averred, had focused too much on the distribution of wealth and too little on its creation. This imbalance had to be rectified by a programme that would prioritise innovation, profitability, risk-taking and efficiency, alongside spending cuts that would stabilise the public finances. The authors also stressed the need to promote personal liberty as well as collective equality: ‘our ideal society would be one in which each individual could develop his or her potential to the full’, adding that ‘we want individuals to have more say in every aspect of their lives – not only as voters at election time, but as workers in their jobs, as tenants in their homes, as consumers in the shops, as patients in the health service, as parents in the schools.’<sup>511</sup> They also accentuated the need to stimulate wealth creation rather than just its redistribution, which Magee stated at the pamphlet’s launch was now being given priority in a way that it ‘never previously had in socialist thinking’.<sup>512</sup>

Magee also suggested that these proposals represented a turn away from the assumptions underlining Croslandite wisdom, but in fact, aside from asserting that public spending had to be reined in, the main elements of orthodox revisionism were not discarded as ruthlessly as the pamphlet’s rhetorical rejection of the past suggested. For all their radical pretensions, the authors stressed their continuing commitment to the ‘mixed economy’, arguing that it was inexpert governance that was as much to blame as misguided doctrine.

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<sup>510</sup> Manifesto Group, *What We Must Do*, p. 12.

<sup>511</sup> Manifesto Group, *What We Must Do*, p. 12.

<sup>512</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 9 March 1977.

Indeed, the pamphlet emulated Crosland in shying away from redefining the concept of ‘democratic socialism’ as understood, articulating the need for careful reform, a rational appreciation of complexities, and a concentration on policy rather than ideas. Repudiating the ‘over-simple’ solutions offered by both the ‘neo-Marxist’ left and the Conservative right, the authors insisted that ‘we want neither the devil-take-the hindmost society of *laissez-faire*... nor a totally planned society, with the destruction of individual initiative and choice, and therefore of freedom, which that brings with it.’<sup>513</sup> This, as Meredith suggests, could be defined as a ‘middle way’ or a ‘third possible course’ for social-democracy, but it was little different from the attitudes most revisionists displayed towards the political extremes.<sup>514</sup>

Responses to the pamphlet, although cognisant that it represented a ‘fightback’ for Labour’s centre-right forces, came to no clear consensus as to its value or significance. Among the press commentariat there was a tendency to view it through the prism of their own prejudices: the *Daily Telegraph*, relishing the pamphlet’s pro-enterprise flavour, observed that parts of it ‘read as if they had been drafted by Conservative Central Office’, while the *Guardian* saw it as a ‘statement of the pragmatic, level-headed Labour case’, one which nevertheless failed to evaluate what the exact relationship between collectivism and freedom should be.<sup>515</sup> A similar divide prevailed amongst business leaders: Sir Maurice Laing, of the civil engineering firm John Laing & Son, agreed with much of the pamphlet’s content, but felt that if anything it overstated the class divide that existed in Britain, whereas the housebuilder Sir Frank Taylor dismissed its aspirations for change in unequivocal terms: ‘Our only hope for the future’, he wrote, ‘is to have a good Conservative government under the leadership of the Rt. Hon. Mrs Margaret Thatcher!’<sup>516</sup> There were some within Labour

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<sup>513</sup> Manifesto Group, *What We Must Do*, p. 12.

<sup>514</sup> Meredith, ‘Rethinking Revisionist Social Democracy’, p. 214.

<sup>515</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 9 March 1977; *Guardian*, 9 March 1977.

<sup>516</sup> NLS, Papers of John Mackintosh MP, Acc. 13476/139 – Letters: Sir Maurice Laing to John Mackintosh, 16 August 1977; Sir Frank Taylor to John Mackintosh, 8 August 1977.

who were also critical, such as Joan Coombes, a party member who discussed the pamphlet in correspondence with the Group's administrator, John Wakefield. Coombes, who was of the 'libertarian' centre-left but not markedly so, felt that it described 'quite accurately the problems but fail[ed] to consider the reasons why these have arisen', and detected in Wakefield's responses to her queries a tendency to bemoan the national situation without attributing any fault to the Government ('you write almost as if the Labour Party were in Opposition').<sup>517</sup>

Coombes also chided the pamphlet's outlook for being 'narrow' and 'often superficial', and while this was harsh it nevertheless highlighted the disdain for 'ideology' – associated as it was with 'extremism' of both the left and the right – that saturated *What We Must Do* throughout. By identifying and occupying the middle ground, the Group could not develop their clarion call for a more libertarian social-democracy into a well-developed argument for revising existing practice. Ironically, this was partly due to a lack of the 'coherent and hard-headed thinking' that the pamphlet's authors demanded: as Radhika Desai put it, the pamphlet lacked 'any clearly researched and documented strategy or perspective', with a preference for generalised prescriptions rather than sustained analysis.<sup>518</sup> Radice later tried to explain the overall purpose of *What We Must Do*, describing it as 'a kind of marriage between Keynesianism and monetarism', but there was little engagement with the underlying principles of Friedmanite economics, and no effort was made to fuse these influences into a genuinely new 'experiment', as Peter Jay had at least tried to do.<sup>519</sup> The pamphlet's imprecision probably also reflects the constraints in which the Group was placed; as a body of moderate backbenchers that had formed to defend the party manifesto, their challenge to

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<sup>517</sup> LHASC, MANIF, 2/23 – Letter: Joan Coombes to John Wakefield, 18 May 1977.

<sup>518</sup> LHASC, MANIF, 2/23 – Letter: Joan Coombes to John Wakefield, 18 May 1977; Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism*, p. 172.

<sup>519</sup> Quoted in Dianne Hayter, 'The Fightback of the Traditional Right in the Labour Party, 1979-1987', unpublished PhD thesis, Queen Mary, University of London (2004), p. 66.

revisionism could deviate only a certain amount from the Government's line, and it was perhaps safer to rely on assertion rather than openly criticise policy direction.

Whatever its impact, *What We Must Do* marked the high watermark of the Group's foray into political philosophy. Its attempts to accommodate themes of liberalisation into existing social-democratic practice were an indicator of how the currents of thought were changing inside the revisionist *laager*, but the pamphlet's own lack of ideological distinction and refusal to challenge the Government or the party too openly left it unable to make a distinctive contribution, and for that reason alone it should be regarded as something of a false start. By the time it was published a 'sister organisation' for the Group had been established, The Campaign for Labour Victory (CLV), which acted as a nucleus for activists outside of parliament to assist the PLP right in fighting the left. Both the Group and the CLV continued to try and plot a 'way out' of the party's problems, but neither seemed willing to push the boundaries of revisionism in any particular direction. The former continued to comment on matters affecting the trade unions, the budget and the 'Lib-Lab pact', but there were no further efforts to create an underlying philosophy, while the CLV – although it was administered by a pair of young Oxford graduates, Roger Liddle and Alec McGivan – had little desire to engage in discussion of ideological matters; its focus was on co-ordinating activism in the constituencies. However, the lack of any attempt to renew their doctrine quickly left many of the Campaign's supporters, in particular, feeling disoriented and without 'a coherent sense of ideological direction', leading some of them to talk 'for the first time in their lives' about the possibility of the party breaking up.<sup>520</sup> Thus, both groups had become a dead end, with exhaustion and cynicism replacing the initial optimism that greeted their foundation.

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<sup>520</sup> LHASC, MANIF, 1/1 – 'Labour Party and CLV', November 1979.

### Revisionists revise, part two: the ‘liberal’ thinkers

If revisionism could not be resuscitated effectively by pressure groups, then the responsibility lay ever more heavily on the shoulders of its dwindling band of intellectual figures. This was particularly evident after the 1979 general election, when Labour was once again reduced to the impotency of opposition. Crosland’s demise may have provoked journalists to briefly look elsewhere in the Cabinet to find his intellectual successor, but in fact many of those who tried to suggest new ideas came from lower down the ranks. Most were MPs who had identified with Jenkins to varying degrees, and they sought to unravel the eclectic mixture of nascent libertarian and pluralist stances that had characterised the opening section of *What Matters Now*. Exploring the limits of egalitarianism, and how to sustain collectivist practice alongside individual freedom, were of paramount importance to them, leading a select few to consider the merits of alternative approaches that, as Geoffrey Foote has acknowledged, emphasised decentralisation and liberalisation as possible solvents for popular discontent.<sup>521</sup> But another concern among the more disaffected was how to free social-democracy from the insular, tribal clutches of Labourism – which eventually persuaded two particularly influential social-democratic thinkers that the party was no longer a suitable home for social-democrats. It was in this guise that a sense of ‘post-revisionism’ slowly began to develop.

One of the first to contribute to any significant degree was Giles Radice. As has been documented in chapter three, much of Radice’s energies involved nudging revisionism towards a greater acceptance of workers’ power in industry. It was his understanding of the wider movement that led him to doubt the *embourgeoisement* narrative of the 1950s and 1960s, writing in *Socialist Commentary* that ‘though some sections of the working class were

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<sup>521</sup> Foote, *Labour Party’s Political Thought*, chapter 11, pp. 235-63.

becoming more affluent, they were certainly not adopting ‘middle class’ values.’<sup>522</sup> Despite these insights he did not follow Crosland into developing an enthusiasm for populism, and when given the opportunity to opine on the matter he agreed with Roy Jenkins that populist ethics negated the ‘vital role of leadership’, without which the working class would be left with even less effective representation.<sup>523</sup> Radice was also one of the few to analyse *Socialism Now* beyond merely expressing dissatisfaction with its lack of novelty. In particular, he wondered if the benefits of the welfare state actually made Crosland’s desire for a more egalitarian society gradually less achievable. ‘Do the better-off majority really want more equality?’, he asked, pointing out that ‘if the Labour Party is to get majority support for putting right the wrongs of minorities, then it must do... something for that majority.’<sup>524</sup>

By 1979, Radice had made enough progress to tackle that conundrum, publishing a Fabian pamphlet, *Community Socialism*, which tried to demonstrate that ‘democratic socialism’ was in fact still relevant ‘to the majority of the people’. Amid the threats to social harmony posed by industrial strife and class tensions, he acknowledged that many ‘natural’ Labour voters were increasingly attracted to the Conservatives’ policy platform, but argued that if the party were to embrace a vision of ‘community’ it would better reflect contemporary values than the ‘market conservatism’ of Margaret Thatcher.<sup>525</sup> Many of his solutions grew from his prior work on industrial democracy and the libertarian elements of *What We Must Do*, which were illustrated in his espousal of small businesses over larger ones and the desire to ‘[give] people a greater say – at work, in their trade unions, on their council estates, and at their children’s schools.’<sup>526</sup> On the issue of equality, he reiterated his earlier argument that social justice could only be ensured if a cross-class ‘coalition’ was established

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<sup>522</sup> Giles Radice, ‘What Kind of Consensus?’, *Socialist Commentary*, May 1972.

<sup>523</sup> Radice, ‘Limits of Populism’.

<sup>524</sup> Giles Radice, ‘Revisionism Revisited’, *Socialist Commentary*, May 1974.

<sup>525</sup> Giles Radice, *Community Socialism*, Fabian Tract 464 (London, 1979), p. 5.

<sup>526</sup> Radice, *Community Socialism*, p. 24.

to guarantee support for redistribution during periods of economic uncertainty, proposing an array of programmes to help those at the bottom while widening support among the bourgeoisie, such as the provision of boarding school places for those from deprived backgrounds and an increase of the tax threshold in line with the ‘acceptable’ minimum standard of living. But Radice also stressed the ‘high priority’ that must be given to freeing people from bureaucracy. His enthusiasm for ‘decentralising’ power led him to support calls for more regional and local devolution as well as envisaging a greater role for the Labour Party in community affairs, which he believed would act as a ‘spur to more effective community services’ and, in so doing, attract disaffected Conservatives and Liberals.<sup>527</sup>

Radice’s fervour for decentralisation was as nothing, however, compared to that of another key revisionist intellectual, Evan Luard. Luard, MP for Oxford until 1979, enjoyed a reputation as a commentator on international affairs, having already written books on the United Nations and Anglo-Chinese relations. A liberal pro-European, he had few connections with the organised Labour right, and was not a member of the Manifesto Group. His first work on political doctrine, *Socialism Without the State*, arrived in the same year as Radice’s Fabian pamphlet. As the title suggests, the book identified technocratic, corporatist governance as the main obstacle to progressive reform, and tried to provide the theoretical structure for a new breed of internationalist socialism that would repudiate statism, whether from the left or the social-democratic right. Recalling the anti-statist tendencies of early socialist and anarchist philosophers such as Proudhon and Bakunin, Luard expressed dismay that so many on the contemporary left still equated public ownership with the concentration of centralised state power. Whereas the first section of the book explored how modern socialists were beguiled by government control, in the second half Luard studied the various dimensions of inequality – of wealth, economic power, and political influence – that persisted

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<sup>527</sup> Radice, *Community Socialism*, p. 23.

in modern society, concluding that the industrial state could actually entrench existing inequalities rather than relieve them, and was just as remote, as controlling, and as alienating to its workforce as any private corporation.<sup>528</sup>

In another pamphlet, *Socialism at the Grass Roots*, Luard tried to place his ideas specifically within the context of contemporary developments in the party, arguing that the performance of recent Labour Governments had borne out his notion that extending public ownership had actually increased inequality, with power in nationalised industries merely shifting ‘from one elite to another’.<sup>529</sup> Like Radice, he criticised successive administrations for spending little time on devising ways for citizens to ‘influence the way the country was run’, and voiced enthusiasm for the ideas already submitted in *Community Socialism* – regional devolution, local government reform and the introduction of industrial democracy – as a means of setting the balance straight.<sup>530</sup> Nonetheless, there were some differences between the two. Luard’s ambitions for what he called ‘microsocialism’ (‘the rooting of socialism in the living community within which ordinary people work’<sup>531</sup>) stemmed from his belief that ‘co-operation’ from the bottom up was superior to ‘participation’ imposed from above. Hence his disinclination to follow Radice in focusing on Treasury policy, and his preference for initiatives at both an industrial and communitarian level that could take on prerogatives formerly held by government: he was particularly supportive of industrial cooperatives and community councils, which he hoped would break the ‘stranglehold of central authority.’<sup>532</sup> Radice, on the other hand, maintained that some kind of bureaucracy was needed for the strategic tasks needed to reduce the inequalities caused by market forces, reinforcing criticisms from other moderate commentators that Luard’s writings did not fully

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<sup>528</sup> Evan Luard, *Socialism without the State* (London, 1979).

<sup>529</sup> Evan Luard, *Socialism at the Grass Roots*, Fabian Tract 468 (London, 1980), p. 18.

<sup>530</sup> Luard, *Socialism at the Grass Roots*, pp. 6-11.

<sup>531</sup> Luard, *Socialism at the Grass Roots*, p. 9.

<sup>532</sup> Luard, *Socialism at the Grass Roots*, pp. 11-2.

appreciate the role of the state as an arbiter in ‘the fundamental conflict that persists between capital and labour’.<sup>533</sup>

Radice and Luard may have disdained the statist inclinations of recent Labour administrations, but their critique did not metamorphose into any sustained assault on the party as an institution. In contrast, both David Marquand and John Mackintosh – two of the senior intellectuals in the Manifesto Group – had become so disillusioned over time that their account of revisionism’s failures hinged on what they believed to be the inherently ‘defective’ character of Labour as a vehicle for corrective reform. Mackintosh was arguably the first revisionist to explore what this meant both in terms of doctrine and *praxis*, writing two essays on the party’s condition for *Political Quarterly* as early as 1972. In both instances much of his ire was focused on the socialist left, but he did not exempt the ‘Centre-Right’ from criticism. Indeed, he felt that the disappointments incurred during Wilson’s first term in office ‘discredited the Right more than the Left’, as it was their agenda that had been found wanting – not least their inability to tackle the structural issues which had consigned Britain to a lower rate of growth than that of the EEC member states.<sup>534</sup> Worse, Mackintosh’s experiences during the European debates left him painfully aware of how the ‘traditionalist’ Labour right had succumbed to the anti-establishment spirit then enveloping the movement, which in his telling explained their regressive viewpoints on various other matters that went beyond Europe – such as trade union reform and Scottish devolution – and the vocabulary and positioning that they now shared with much of the left.<sup>535</sup>

Given Mackintosh’s position on the desirability of incomes policy (see chapter three), it is no surprise that both he and Marquand regarded James Callaghan as an exemplar of such traditionalist perfidy. ‘Callaghanite Labourism, with its corporatist kow-towing to the

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<sup>533</sup> Radice, *Community Socialism*, p. 9; Robert Taylor, ‘For Man or Mass’, *New Society*, 26 July 1979.

<sup>534</sup> John P. Mackintosh, ‘The Problems of the Labour Party’, *Political Quarterly*, 43:1 (1972), pp. 5-6.

<sup>535</sup> Mackintosh, ‘Socialism or Social Democracy?’, pp. 474-5.

Unions’, recalled Marquand, was ‘less attractive to us than Bennite neo-Marxism’, so much so that both men were – rather ironically, given their views – rumoured to have cast their votes in the final round of the leadership election for Michael Foot (an accusation subsequently denied by Mackintosh in a letter to Roy Jenkins).<sup>536</sup> Mackintosh, in particular, already had form in this regard, having been one of the more unrepentant members of the ‘awkward squad’ that tried to sabotage Harold Wilson when he was Prime Minister, describing himself in a letter to the *Times* editor William Rees-Mogg as a ‘known hawk’ on the matter.<sup>537</sup> But open disrespect had its consequences, and when he rather opportunistically beseeched Jenkins to ‘put in a word for me’ with the new Government in 1976 he found that his mentor was unable to prevent him from being vetoed by Callaghan as a potential ministerial recruit.<sup>538</sup> The knowledge that he was *persona non grata* not only hurt Mackintosh, it left him with an even greater animus towards the party’s hierarchs than before; Marquand, for his part, was to describe his friend’s inability to secure even a junior spokespersonship when in opposition as a ‘scandal’.<sup>539</sup>

Leaving both men outside of the tent may have ruined their chances of career progression, but it also gave them time to ruminate on how their political creed could be modernised. Mackintosh was already dwelling on the correct balance between liberty and equality, concluding in private that ‘there is a real danger that individual liberty is being eroded’ by the ‘big battalions’ of the state, and in 1978 he followed this up by penning another essay for *Political Quarterly* on the current problems that revisionism was failing to

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<sup>536</sup> Marquand, ‘The London Review of Books Started...’; WES, Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 113 – Letter: John Mackintosh to Roy Jenkins, 29 March 1976. The rumour about Mackintosh voting for Foot did not die down, and was subsequently inferred in an article published in the *Guardian*, 28 February 1977.

<sup>537</sup> NLS, Mackintosh, Acc. 13476/46 – Letter: John Mackintosh to William Rees-Mogg, 12 September 1973.

<sup>538</sup> WES, Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 113 – Letter: John Mackintosh to Roy Jenkins, 29 March 1976; Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 53 – Dictated journals, 1976, p. 39.

<sup>539</sup> David Marquand, ‘John Mackintosh: Social Democrat’, *Listener*, 2 November 1978.

solve.<sup>540</sup> Reinforcing the Manifesto Group's contention that its main flaw was still the reliance on unabated growth, Mackintosh's essay identified two further aspects that made contemporary social-democracy inadequate for the 1970s. The first was Crosland's aversion to theory, which left him unable to plot a demarcation line between the private and public sectors that would designate the correct set of responsibilities for each, and which could have prevented the kind of over-reach that had seen the state assume monolithic status in some areas. Mackintosh argued that the prevailing 'social atmosphere' in Britain had instead 'weakened and demoralised the private sector', diverting talent away from business and into 'administration, academic life, the social services and the media'.<sup>541</sup> The second was the expectation that economic and institutional changes would transform social attitudes, which Mackintosh believed was a mistake: attitudes had indeed changed, but not necessarily in ways that revisionists might want – the introduction of comprehensive schools did not always eliminate class differences, for example, while raising wages for the underpaid could provoke hostility rather than encourage any sense of solidarity. In seeking to advance equality, therefore, Crosland had unleashed a number of unintended consequences, to the detriment of his own agenda.<sup>542</sup>

Marquand, who had abandoned parliament alongside Jenkins in 1977 to work for the European Commission, largely concurred with Mackintosh's conclusions and may even have influenced them; in their correspondence from that year, for example, he was particularly aggrieved by the stifling of 'individual excellence' as a result of state expansion.<sup>543</sup> But Marquand's input lay in his emerging belief that revisionism's problems could be solved only by breaking up the party that hosted them. 'The more I think about the present and likely

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<sup>540</sup> John P. Mackintosh, 'Liberty and Equality: Getting the Balance Right', in David Marquand (ed.), *John P. Mackintosh on Parliament and Social Democracy* (London, 1982), p. 189.

<sup>541</sup> John P. Mackintosh, 'Has Social Democracy Failed in Britain?', *Political Quarterly*, 49:3 (1978), pp. 267-8.

<sup>542</sup> Mackintosh, 'Has Social Democracy Failed in Britain?', pp. 259-70.

<sup>543</sup> NLS, Mackintosh, Acc. 13476/10 – Letter: David Marquand to John Mackintosh, 21 August 1977.

future state of British politics’, he wrote to Mackintosh, ‘the clearer it becomes that the only hope of rescuing the country from the doldrums of the last 20 years is a realignment of the Left.’<sup>544</sup> The Labour Party, he claimed, could never become ‘a non-doctrinaire, non-class radical party of the sort Gaitskell tried to turn it into’, arguing in a follow-up letter that it ‘[did not] have a tradition of respect for ideas and concern with fundamental philosophy’.<sup>545</sup> While admitting that parliamentary right-wingers would be divided in the event of such a realignment he did not seem greatly concerned about the prospect. The people he was really aiming to encourage were ‘disillusioned social democrats’, from Labour and elsewhere, who felt that the party no longer represented them. It was they who (he believed) were in tune with contemporary values, not a tired insular party that only begrudgingly accepted the mixed economy, and which was incapable of properly transforming itself into a true social-democratic party ‘in the way the [German] SPD did.’<sup>546</sup>

These certainties seem to have overpowered Mackintosh. ‘I really think everything you say is right’, he wrote back, ‘and the only conclusion is that I simply should get out of the Labour Party’.<sup>547</sup> Although he now also felt that a realignment of the left was desirable, his unfortunate death in 1978 prevented him from elaborating much further. It was therefore up to Marquand to fully shape their joint contribution to post-revisionist thought, attacking the traditionalist, Labourist reflexes that he believed had smothered the party’s social-democratic potential. In a defining article for *Encounter* magazine, printed shortly after the 1979 general election and ominously entitled ‘Inquest on a Movement’, he elaborated on his earlier musings with Mackintosh, discussing what had gone wrong for the party over the

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<sup>544</sup> NLS, Mackintosh, Acc. 13476/10 – Letter: David Marquand to John Mackintosh, undated [c.1977].

<sup>545</sup> NLS, Mackintosh, Acc. 13476/10 – Letter: David Marquand to John Mackintosh, undated [c.1977]; Letter: David Marquand to John Mackintosh, 21 August 1977.

<sup>546</sup> NLS, Mackintosh, Acc. 13476/10 – Letter: David Marquand to John Mackintosh, undated [c.1977]; Letter: David Marquand to John Mackintosh, 21 August 1977.

<sup>547</sup> NLS, Mackintosh, Acc. 13476/10 – Letter: John Mackintosh to David Marquand, 31 August 1977.

previous decade and identifying the factors that had led it to electoral defeat.<sup>548</sup> Arguing that the Labour movement had remained uninterested in political thought and was hostile to the ‘radical intelligentsia’ that produced it, he suggested that the upsurge in anti-intellectualism experienced in recent years was at the root of the party’s malaise. A ‘sensible party’, he claimed, would have done whatever it could to encourage new thinking within its ranks, but Labour’s leaders instead fell back on the conventional wisdom of the post-war welfare state rather than face any reassessment that would help it address its present crisis. The party, he said, wanted ‘a quiet doctrinal life’, to keep ‘the old show on the old road in the old way.’ This meant, alas, that social-democracy continued to be too heavily influenced by the outdated doctrines of Fabianism and Keynesianism – ‘both manipulative creeds, which held that society could only be reformed from above’ – and much less so by the ‘moral persuasion and individual autonomy’ that had been preached by the inter-war New Liberals.<sup>549</sup>

Marquand considered the party’s ‘anti-intellectualism’ to be partly the result of a ‘strange, inward-looking proletarianism’ that had taken hold within Labour since the 1960s (‘The cult of the tea room’). This ‘proletarianism’, he said, was a ‘smell in the air, not a text on paper’, which had led its proponents to lionise the movement’s working-class roots and openly disdain the bourgeois style that prevailed among its intelligentsia.<sup>550</sup> Such an antagonistic frame of mind was, in his eyes, the factor that explained why the split between populists and ‘élitists’ over the EEC was so virulent, why the unions were so powerful, why Callaghan had won the party leadership against better-qualified candidates, and why his administration had been so ineffective. Marquand claimed that this new demotic spirit had captured large swathes of the party, levelling his suspicions at what he called the ‘old Right’ for its own complacent, class-conscious mindset and the spineless manner in which it had

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<sup>548</sup> NLS, Mackintosh, Acc. 13476/10 – Letter: David Marquand to John Mackintosh, 21 August 1977; Marquand, ‘Inquest on a Movement’.

<sup>549</sup> Marquand, ‘Inquest on a Movement’.

<sup>550</sup> Marquand, ‘Inquest on a Movement’.

accommodated the left over the years. Perhaps because he was describing only a ‘mood’ rather than any kind of discernible faction or tendency, he did not take the trouble to define in his article who or what constituted this ‘old Right’ – although it likely involved the Callaghanites and other ‘traditional’ loyalists, would it have included the trade unionist MPs involved in the ‘reforming’ Manifesto Group or Crosland’s small band of devotees, who still had pretensions to being ‘radical intellectuals’ themselves? It was no matter, for Marquand made it clear that the cap only had to fit. ‘What is needed now’, he said, ‘is to abandon both socialism and the kind of social democracy we have known since the war, in a way that would upset the old Right of the Labour Party at least as much as it would upset the left.’<sup>551</sup>

## Conclusion

Marquand’s ‘inquest’ was not well received by the remaining Croslandites in the party. David Lipsey accused him of misrepresenting Crosland’s agenda by attributing to it ‘certain centralist and statist ideas which belong rather to the Webbs’, and emulated his master’s populism by contending that the ‘anti-intellectual’ attitude Marquand found so upsetting was an understandable reaction to the ‘self-satisfied behaviour’ displayed by the Marketeers during the EEC debates and thereafter.<sup>552</sup> Crosland’s replacement as the MP for Grimsby, Austin Mitchell, although less trenchant, similarly cast a dim view on Marquand’s ‘Europeanism’ and his apparent disregard for the importance of economic growth; the latter’s facility as a tool of ‘redistribution and betterment’ was one of the ‘central tenets’ of

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<sup>551</sup> Marquand, ‘Inquest on a Movement’.

<sup>552</sup> Lipsey, ‘Crosland’s Socialism’, pp. 21, 25.

revisionism, he argued, and by not appreciating that Marquand revealed himself to be ‘out of touch with the party’ and perhaps not even a social-democrat at all.<sup>553</sup>

The refusal of both men to countenance Marquand’s criticisms gives an indication of why the latter was so energised about the lack of new thinking on the right. For him, and for his close ally John Mackintosh, the continuing insistence by Crosland on prioritising the quest for greater social equality right up to his death – and his concomitant refusal to accept drastic cuts in the Government’s budget – was reflective of a mindset that was fixed in the certainties of a previous era. The growth of the state had failed to fix many of the problems besetting Britain in the 1970s, leaving existing revisionist strategy looking shop-soiled and marked by the tint of failure. Efforts to introduce liberalisation were thus as much about rejuvenating it as they were about challenging egalitarianism, which all social-democrats still subscribed to. Instead, revisionists sought merely to redress the balance between the ethics of liberty and equality, focusing on various different elements of that relationship. For the Manifesto Group, operating in the aftermath of the IMF crisis, the focus was on introducing facets of market-liberal ‘shock doctrine’ to the political system, but their attempts to harmonise Keynesianism with monetarism were not well-structured enough to escape the stultifying confines of the middle ground between Conservatism and the hard left. As for the Jenkinsites, they were influenced by the pluralism and social idealism of their leader, but it was only after he had left parliament that some of the more radical amongst them – notably Radice and Luard – began to put in place the beginnings of a new liberal social-democratic philosophy that placed weight upon devolving power to individuals and institutions.

The challenge to Croslandite social-democracy represented by these new ways of thinking had consequences for revisionist identity. Crosland was in many respects the archetypal ‘intellectual’ revisionist, but his loyalty to the party and experiences over the

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<sup>553</sup> Austin Mitchell, ‘Inquest on a Coroner’, *Encounter*, December 1979.

'Common Market issue' led him to develop a populist approach to politics, which in its proletarianism and 'common sense' attitudes to social questions was much more akin to the mores of the 'unideological', traditional right. Indeed, throughout the 1970s he placed great importance on appealing more to the 'centre' of the Labour Party, and he arguably achieved that wish when he became an ally of James Callaghan following the latter's elevation to the premiership in 1976 – despite the fact that Callaghan's Government ironically saw the beginnings of the end for Crosland's brand of revisionism. His legacy was already under attack even before his early death, and the vacuum that opened up thereafter provided an opportunity for several of Roy Jenkins's younger associates to fashion the liberalism of their mentor into a 'new' type of revisionism, a 'post-revisionism', that would better reflect the current age – and which, in the words of Marquand, would be as separate from the 'old Right' as it was from the left.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The ‘populist’ right: Stephen Haseler and the Social Democratic Alliance

#### Introduction

Leaving aside the two existing typologies of revisionism and ‘traditionalism’ (or ‘Labourism’), there is a third alternative mode of political identity that emerged within the Labour Party in the early 1970s. This was the ‘populist’ tendency, a phenomenon that affected both the left and right wings of the party. Populism is, like traditionalism, possessed of little doctrinal coherence or programmatic definition; rather, as Harry Lazer states, its impetus comes from feelings of resentment and disaffection, which often revolve around the belief that the desires of ordinary people have been checked in some way by the machinations of a contemptuous, often corrupt ‘élite’.<sup>554</sup> The revulsion towards the pro-Marketees that had crystallised during the debates on EEC entry was the first indicator of how such a disposition would develop into a distinct, if minority, tendency over the course of the decade. One of its main advocates was Stephen Haseler, who had already distinguished himself on the anti-Market right (see chapter one) by challenging the ‘elitist liberal’ conception of revisionism – which, in his description, combined a rational disposition and acceptance of the verities of ‘classlessness’ with a disdain for the political opinions expressed by the working-classes themselves. Haseler argued that it was the intuitive reasoning and personal experience of the common man which Labour – as their historic political representatives – had to understand, upholding that such factors were a legitimate base for the party’s ideology. Although

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<sup>554</sup> Lazer, ‘Labour Party and the Common Market Parliamentary Debate’, p. 259.

appearing to critics as little more than a ‘traditionalist’ reflex, Haseler contended that this ‘Labourist-populist’ form of social-democracy, as he termed it, was an important variant of revisionism, which he sought to justify by referring to the values he believed Hugh Gaitskell had embodied while he was leader.

As the decade progressed, Haseler joined forces with the wayward Cabinet minister Reginald Prentice to launch the Social Democratic Alliance (SDA), a grassroots vehicle which sought to invoke Gaitskell’s name as a beacon of courage against the pusillanimity and weakness of the mainstream right. Although still ‘moderates’ in opinion, neither man saw any reason why they had to be moderate in action: Haseler, in particular, soon acquired a reputation as a sinister *agent provocateur*, who was trying his hardest not so much to save the party from chaos as to dare the leadership to expel him. His disgust at the way so many right-wingers yielded on principle coincided with a questioning of his own values: already at odds with so much of contemporary revisionism, his battles with the left eventually soured his attitude towards the entire structure of post-war British social-democracy. Although retaining his populist instincts, he no longer subscribed to Labourism as a political vehicle for the working class, and his disaffection with Labour consequently led him to explore other avenues for political action. However, his ethical ideals remained: he was still committed to egalitarianism in the form of anti-élitism, and even when he embraced more avowedly liberal economic ideas in the late 1970s he continued articulating them in populist fashion in much the same way as before.

The opening section of this chapter shall discuss Haseler’s ideas more closely, in particular the two oppositional forms of revisionism that he defined – ‘Labourist populism’ and ‘liberal socialism’. It shall then go on to look at the role played by the SDA in fighting the left, before analysing how Haseler’s increasing disillusion with contemporary social-democracy led him to retain his populist leanings while shedding the Labourist aspect,

prompting a shift away from his earlier anti-élitist egalitarianism and towards an equally vociferous anti-élitist libertarianism instead. The chapter then explores how Haseler was willing to consider virtually any means of forcing a realignment in British politics – which included a brief period informally advising Margaret Thatcher, the Conservative Party leader, on how to adapt his populist wisdom to suit her purposes – before going on to describe the process by which he and his close circle of supporters were eventually ejected from the Labour Party.<sup>555</sup>

### **‘Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism’**

Haseler’s early career was characterised by a single-minded devotion to the party that had nurtured him. Born in 1942, he came from a staunch Labour-supporting family – his mother had once told him that if ‘the Tories get in they’ll put turnstiles on the streets’.<sup>556</sup> Joining the party at the age of sixteen<sup>557</sup>, as a student he was closely involved in the Campaign for Democratic Socialism, co-organising its Youth Section.<sup>558</sup> His precocious appetite for political activity led to him becoming Labour’s youngest parliamentary candidate at the 1966 general election, when he fought and lost the safe Conservative seat of Saffron Walden. Seeking to become an academic, he found employment as a lecturer at the City of London Polytechnic in 1969, where he taught political theory. That same year, his doctoral dissertation on revisionism in the 1950s was published as his first book, *The Gaitskellites*. A

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<sup>555</sup> Much of this chapter has already appeared in print as a journal article. See Calum Aikman, ‘From Labourism to Thatcherism: Stephen Haseler and the Social Democratic Alliance’, *Labour History Review*, 84:3 (2019), pp. 267–94.

<sup>556</sup> *Guardian*, 24 November 1976.

<sup>557</sup> BLPES, Sandelson papers, 4/8 – ‘Biographical Details of SDA Executive Officers’, April 1979.

<sup>558</sup> Witness Seminar, ‘The Campaign for Democratic Socialism, 1960–64’, *Contemporary Record*, 7:2 (1993), pp. 363, 369.

paean to the growth of the Labour right at a time when its strength was seemingly insurmountable, Haseler crafted a narrative that highlighted the revisionists' status both as the authors of a body of doctrine and as a group of effective, united parliamentary politicians.<sup>559</sup> The 'greatest single factor' in their success, he concluded, was Hugh Gaitskell himself, who discarded old dogmas in favour of a new 'relevant, practical political philosophy'.<sup>560</sup> He was to venerate the man for as long as he remained in politics.

It was only in 1971 that Haseler emerged as a critic of revisionism as it had evolved in the decade following Gaitskell's death. The European debates, as explained in chapter two, had galvanised him into action against Labour's pro-Market bloc, and he distinguished himself during that year's debates by unleashing several diatribes which berated them for being out of tune with the instincts of both the Labour movement and the general public.<sup>561</sup> But the anti-élitist sentiments he expressed had a much deeper foundation, one that went beyond simply expressing irritation at Labour's 'European' tendency. As he explained in a *Tribune* article shortly after the Commons vote on entry, he regarded their perfidy as important not just for the impact it would have on British sovereignty, but because it illustrated a deep divide over the core revisionist ethic of equality that would have dire consequences for the unity of the Labour right. 'No longer can it be kept a secret', he wrote, 'that a fundamental division of philosophy has emerged within British socialism, indeed among those, rather naively, who used to be lumped together on the Right. It is a division between genuine egalitarians and modern liberals... between those who ultimately want to break and those who implicitly need to bolster the Establishment.'<sup>562</sup>

This insight formed the essence of his political philosophy in the 1970s, and became the basis for a bricolage of ideas that ultimately bore fruit with the publication of *Social*

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<sup>559</sup> Haseler, *Gaitskellites*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>560</sup> Haseler, *Gaitskellites*, pp. 251-3.

<sup>561</sup> *Times*, 6 November 1971.

<sup>562</sup> Stephen Haseler, 'Labour and the Whigs', *Tribune*, 26 November 1971.

*Democracy – Beyond Revisionism* that same year. Written as a pamphlet for the Fabian Society, Haseler and his co-author John Gyford observed that social-democracy, despite remaining ‘the most popular single political persuasion in Europe’, was now ‘unfashionable’ and plagued by timidity and ‘self-doubt’. They attributed this unwelcome state of affairs to the status of revisionism as the ‘social democratic orthodoxy’ of the political left: blinded by their own success, its advocates were bereft of the tools necessary to solve the problems that had emerged by the end of the 1960s. Having lost their way, the authors argued that it was the responsibility of a new generation of social-democrats to revive their doctrine.<sup>563</sup> In true revisionist fashion they proposed that, as social-democracy is a ‘historical attitude’ motivated by ethical principles rather than a ‘total system of interpretation’, it must evolve by a ‘never-ending contest of interests and ideas’.<sup>564</sup>

Their contribution to this ‘contest’ was to elaborate on Haseler’s insights during the EEC debates by seeking to define revisionism as a ‘double-headed political phenomenon’, one embodying both the progressive, liberal attributes of its leaders and a powerful *alter ego* that animated much of its core support. ‘Labourism’, as the authors dubbed the latter, was portrayed as a form of grassroots, proletarian identity politics, motivated above all by a regard for the values of populism – the belief, in their words, ‘that virtue resides in the simple, ordinary people’ and their understanding of society.<sup>565</sup> Their analysis of what constituted ‘popular aspirations’ was unavoidably subjective, and focused primarily on affirming the historic sense of alienation as experienced by the masses. Social-democracy, they claimed, had ‘benefited electorally from a mild, tolerant yet very real class war [that] has successfully tapped fundamental human reactions to poverty, suffering and injustice and

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<sup>563</sup> John Gyford and Stephen Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, Fabian Research Series 292 (London, 1971), pp.1, 14.

<sup>564</sup> Gyford and Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, pp. 14-6.

<sup>565</sup> Gyford and Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, pp. 18, 26.

populist resentment against an establishment which allowed these conditions to continue without amelioration.<sup>566</sup>

Haseler and Gyford recognised, however, that existing Labourism went against the grain of received wisdom, noting that ‘the old image of cloth cap socialism was held to be incompatible with the requirements of winning power in an affluent society’. But they argued that by adopting ‘moderate and increasingly classless images’ the Labour Party had already endangered its own future prospects, as the British proletariat was developing in a manner which earlier prophets of *embourgeoisement* had not envisaged. Although ‘the workers’ had shed much of the communitarian identity that once bound them to the party, they had failed to absorb the social and political perspectives of the middle class; instead, they vehemently asserted their own material interests, which manifested itself in the ‘fluctuating, bewildered and irritated aggressiveness’ that had characterised many recent outbreaks of industrial unrest.<sup>567</sup> Such an analysis was influenced by the work of the Cambridge sociologists John Goldthorpe and David Lockwood, whose research into blue-collar ‘affluent workers’ during the late 1960s found that, while such workers were still conditioned to support Labour, they had largely jettisoned any tribal sense of ‘solidarity’ towards the party, voting primarily on an ‘instrumental’ basis and with the expectation of a ‘pay-off’ from socialist governments in the form of ‘higher living standards and better social services’.<sup>568</sup> Haseler and Gyford’s response to this situation, by emphasising populism as complementary to Labourism, was to make revisionism versatile enough to attract not only those ‘affluent workers’ but other hitherto neglected groups, such as the provincial or the merely ‘unfashionable’, that also lay outside the traditional working class. ‘Labourism is not static’, they noted, ‘in fact, it may no longer

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<sup>566</sup> Gyford and Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, p. 19.

<sup>567</sup> Gyford and Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, p. 19.

<sup>568</sup> Stephen Haseler, *The Death of British Democracy* (London, 1976), p. 140; John H. Goldthorpe, David Lockwood, Frank Bechhofer and Jennifer Platt, *The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 78-81.

be the expression of popular resentment by manual workers against poverty but may slowly be becoming the popular resentment by *all* against unimportance'.<sup>569</sup>

In contrast, the other mode of revisionist thought, which Haseler and Gyford branded 'liberal socialism', was something they considered unburdened by any form of class consciousness; on the contrary, they claimed its adherents had 'sought classlessness' in order to pursue a universalist defence of individual freedoms and rights. If Labourism was the vehicle of working-class consciousness, then liberal socialism was the unyielding bastion of the educated bourgeoisie. 'Professionals, intellectuals, teachers, university lecturers, broadcasters, advertising executives and so on', they wrote, were all prominent within its ranks, and while no politicians were identified by name the liberal socialist archetype strongly correlated with the 'Whig class' Haseler had criticised during and after the EEC debates, namely Roy Jenkins and his parliamentary associates.<sup>570</sup> Although conceding that such people were egalitarian in spirit, the authors harboured the suspicion that the 'socialist liberal in his heart of hearts finds the social conscience of the rich more attractive than the resentful prejudices of the unwealthy,' leading to an excessive focus on frivolous issues (such as the environment) that were 'not central to the task of contemporary socialism'.<sup>571</sup>

One of the most interesting facets of Haseler and Gyford's characterisation of this 'liberal socialist' strand of revisionist thought was their discussion of the role that rationalism played in shaping it. An attachment to the dictates of reason, the authors avowed, was the method by which liberal revisionists established their supremacy within the Labour movement. Disdainful of 'the cruder forms of political instinct and emotion', they pursued a 'Fabian' approach that prioritised empirical research as the basis of policy, on the basis that imbuing politics with a greater rational content 'would automatically benefit progressive,

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<sup>569</sup> Gyford and Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, p. 19

<sup>570</sup> Gyford and Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, pp. 19-20; Haseler, 'Labour and the Whigs'.

<sup>571</sup> Gyford and Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, pp. 20, 27.

liberal and socialist forces'. But research demands expertise that can be provided only by trained specialists and experts, thereby disqualifying 'large numbers of people who nevertheless have something to say about politics, even if what they have to say is intuitive and emotional.' Inevitably, by placing power in the hands of the expert and the planner it would have to be diverted away from the masses, who would be left with no choice but to accept decisions taken ostensibly on their behalf but which were not actually in their interests at all.<sup>572</sup>

Given Haseler's excoriation of the Marketeers for their élitism and his impassioned defences of working people, it was no surprise which 'branch' of revisionism he and Gyford favoured: 'the weighting has become unbalanced and the fulcrum must be restored... Labourism must take precedence over liberalism.'<sup>573</sup> Their idea of 'Labourism', of course, bore a strong resemblance to the worldview held by the 'traditionalist' element of the Labour right; at the very least, it incorporated that mood into a new, specifically 'populist' strategy that they hoped would revive the right's connection with the working class. But Haseler and Gyford presented this strain as a legitimate form of revisionism rather than as something separate from it, and their justification came once again from the idealised view Haseler, in particular, had of Hugh Gaitskell's aptitude as a leader. Despite being a 'middle-class liberal internationalist', Gaitskell was in their telling essentially a 'patriot, appealing to popular sovereignty' – an apparent paradox which they celebrated as evidence of his ability to transcend the Labourist-liberal divide. 'The crucial point about Hugh Gaitskell', they stated, 'was that for a short while in the early 'sixties he combined within him these two kinds of social democratic revisionism'.<sup>574</sup> However, Haseler and Gyford did not comment on the difficulties Gaitskell had experienced in pacifying the right while leader: there was no

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<sup>572</sup> Gyford and Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, p. 21.

<sup>573</sup> Gyford and Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, pp. 26-7.

<sup>574</sup> Gyford and Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, p. 18.

acknowledgement of the occasions when he offended the ‘working-class chauvinist vote’ during the Suez crisis, nor of the struggles he encountered with party loyalists during the controversy over Clause IV (see chapter one).<sup>575</sup> Gaitskell’s faith in the power of reason also went unremarked.

Upon publication, Haseler and Gyford’s work was considered striking enough to be noted by several commentators. The economist Alan Day, for example, cited the pamphlet as part of a wider survey of socialism in the pages of *Socialist Commentary* soon after it was published. Day agreed that the Labourist-populist attitude they had identified constituted a separate ‘style’ of social-democracy, and that it was of equal validity to the liberal, progressive ideals found elsewhere in the party.<sup>576</sup> He also pointed out that Haseler and Gyford had much in common with other socialist intellectuals, referring, in particular, to the work of the sociologist Frank Parkin, who had recently published a book, *Class Inequality and Political Order*, which detected a similar division between ‘meritocratic’ and ‘egalitarian’ forms of socialism. Both Parkin and Barry Hindess, another sociologist with an interest in class loyalties and political behaviour, had detected in the composition of the Labour Party an increasing imbalance towards ‘middle-class liberals’, a group which Parkin believed chose to work in the ‘welfare professions’ as a ‘sanctuary’ from the commercial values found elsewhere in society.<sup>577</sup> Parkin, however, argued that their rise represented the triumph of meritocratic socialism at the expense of the ‘traditional socialist goals and principles’ held by the egalitarian variant, directly challenging the contention of *Social*

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<sup>575</sup> Gyford and Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, p. 17; Jenkins, ‘Gaitskell and his Life’, p. 17.

<sup>576</sup> Alan Day, ‘Two Faces of Democratic Socialism’, *Socialist Commentary*, May 1971.

<sup>577</sup> Frank Parkin, ‘Middle Class Radicals’, *New Society*, 21 March 1968; Barry Hindess, *The Decline of Working-Class Politics* (London, 1971).

*Democracy – Beyond Revisionism* that an emphasis on working-class identity politics and popular sovereignty was still a viable option for the party.<sup>578</sup>

Within the party itself, one leading revisionist who broadly welcomed Haseler and Gyford's theses was Anthony Crosland, who – as we have seen – found the liberal inclinations of the right-wing Marketeers unappealing. Commenting on the pamphlet in an article for *Socialist Commentary* in November 1971, he agreed that there was 'a certain truth' to the idea that working-class voters were estranged from government policies that seemed to 'bear little relation to the realities of the everyday life of ordinary people', citing permissive legislation, 'the arts', and higher education as examples of progressive concerns that diverted attention from the continued failure to deal with unemployment and the cost of living.<sup>579</sup> Crosland's approval may not have existed on a purely intellectual level, however, as there were also personal connections at work, with Haseler having already become a peripheral member of his political circle during the EEC debates.<sup>580</sup> Although never attempting to enshrine it as a key aspect of revisionist philosophy, Crosland's endorsement of populism at this time (see chapter four) can therefore be seen as in harmony with, and perhaps influenced by, the unalloyed hostility to 'élites' shown by his young protégé.<sup>581</sup>

In contrast, a prominent critic on the Labour right was John P. Mackintosh, a Jenkinsite liberal who refused to believe that Haseler and Gyford were even revisionists at all. viewing their 'populist-socialist approach' as influenced instead by the party's traditional left. Remaining wedded to the standard revisionist belief that social-democracy should be about maintaining equality between all groups, Mackintosh dismissed their channelling of

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<sup>578</sup> Frank Parkin, *Class Inequality and Political Order: Social Stratification in Capitalist and Communist Societies* (London, 1971), pp. 184-5.

<sup>579</sup> Crosland, 'Policies for the People, by the People'.

<sup>580</sup> Unsurprisingly, Haseler took a particularly aggressive line towards the Jenkinsites when in this company, telling Susan Crosland that Roy Jenkins should 'never be leader of the Labour Party.' See BLPES, Crosland, 19/2 – Susan Crosland's journals, undated [1971].

<sup>581</sup> As inferred in Eden, 'Colin Welch's "Crosland"'. See also Stuart Middleton, 'Affluence and the Left in Britain, c.1958-1974', *English Historical Review*, cxxix:536 (2014), pp. 134-5.

grievances from below as little more than a pretext for special pleading. To illustrate the damage these grievances could cause, he returned to one of the arguments enlisted in support of a national incomes policy (see chapter two) by drawing attention to the competitive wage bargaining that existed between trade unions. As their jockeying for position had stoked up inflation, he argued, so it led to unequal outcomes and the denial of social justice to some of the country's most underprivileged citizens, indicating how such 'Labourist-populist' demands were imbued with a fundamentally 'negative or conservative character' rather than anything approaching genuine radicalism.<sup>582</sup> This argument was subsequently reaffirmed – from a very different viewpoint – by the political theorist Tom Nairn, who observed that, since Haseler's concept of 'class' was 'essentially conservative folklore', it was 'logical that 'back to class' should emerge as the slogan of a reactionary, right-wing populism'.<sup>583</sup>

Perhaps anticipating these objections, Haseler and Gyford had argued that they were actually trying to prevent the Conservative Right (especially the element associated with the demagogic MP Enoch Powell) from gaining momentum:

The need for socialists... to appeal to popular aspirations, becomes all the more important when one considers the impending danger from a resurgent Right-wing populism that could have an especial appeal to those sections of European industrialised society that have traditionally supported the Left.<sup>584</sup>

Indeed, both men insisted that they were radicals rather than reactionaries, and they were shrewd enough to realise that their class-based 'Labourist' doctrines, whilst clearly

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<sup>582</sup> Mackintosh, 'Socialism or Social Democracy?', pp. 472-3, 477-9.

<sup>583</sup> Nairn, 'Left Against Europe?', p. 65n. Nairn was, in this instance, referring to the Right of the ideological continuum as a whole, not just within Labour.

<sup>584</sup> Gyford and Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism*, p. 25. See also Stephen Haseler, 'Labour and the Powellites', *Socialist Commentary*, November 1968.

‘Gaitskellite’ in provenance, had the potential to appeal beyond the Labour moderates to those of a more explicit left-wing disposition. In one of his earlier pieces on the EEC, for example, Haseler voiced his disagreement with the idea that rejecting ‘Whiggish’ liberalism and embracing populism involved making a retreat from transformative politics, remarking that it was a ‘tragically and heedlessly conservative’ assumption that the public yearns for a ‘moderate and “middle-of-the-road” party and would turn away in droves from a more militant and adventurous party of the Left’.<sup>585</sup>

But in rejecting the idea that non-rational political tendencies – such as resentment, prejudice and emotion – should be the exclusive property of the Right, they failed to envisage how going ‘beyond revisionism’ in this manner could potentially leave them adrift from the Labour Party altogether. By defining populism as the expression of what ‘ordinary people’ feel about politics, and advocating it as a means to include voters who were on the margins of the archetypal ‘traditional’ Labour electorate, they gave no reason why it should be yoked to Labourism at all and not to some other mutually sympathetic alternative. Moreover, the authors were so fixated on dissecting the revisionist mindset that they barely mentioned the trade unions or any other form of associative life: given that the safest haven for the Labourist viewpoint was found amid the ranks of unionised heavy industry this could be viewed as surprising, but in fact it illustrated the possibility that their brand of anti-establishment politics, for all its avowal of working-class identity, could potentially exist outside the confines of the organised labour movement.

### **Reg Prentice and the birth of the Social Democratic Alliance**

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<sup>585</sup> Haseler, ‘Labour and the Whigs’.

Although *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism* was meant as an emphatic statement of intent, much more had to be done if Haseler was to maintain his own distinct personal profile in the party. Having initially put himself forward without success as a general election candidate<sup>586</sup>, he soon lowered his political ambitions by focusing instead on gaining a seat on the Greater London Council (GLC), and in 1973 he was selected as a Labour candidate in Haringey borough for the forthcoming elections. Standing in Hounslow was Douglas Eden, a lecturer at Middlesex Polytechnic and ‘an active campaigner against British entry into the Common Market’.<sup>587</sup> Both men were elected, and over the next decade they were to maintain a united front in the struggle to defend their populist vision of social-democracy.

Labour gained full control of the GLC that year, and after the election Haseler was named by the council’s new leader, Sir Reginald Goodwin, as one of its committee chairmen, with responsibility for the General Purposes portfolio. Notwithstanding the power he was now able to wield, the position also raised his public image as an active party politician.<sup>588</sup> By this stage Haseler had decided that it was the influx of new activists into the party from the far left of the political spectrum, even more so than the ‘elitist’ liberals on the right, which posed the real hazard to the Gaitskellite values he believed in. There was one moment in 1973 that catalysed his reassessment of the situation: the removal by the NEC of the proscribed list of organisations from the party constitution, which had forbidden members from joining the Communists, Socialist Workers’ Party (SWP) and other similar-minded ‘front’ groups. What appalled Haseler was the lack of resistance from the parliamentary Labour right: ‘the “moderates” decided not to make much of a fuss about it’, he complained in 1976, ‘Any such fuss was considered “counter-productive”’.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>586</sup> *Times*, 9 November 1971.

<sup>587</sup> BLPES, Douglas Eden papers, 6 – Greater London Council election flyer, 1973.

<sup>588</sup> *Times*, 21 April 1973.

<sup>589</sup> Stephen Haseler, ‘Can British Socialism Survive?’, *Encounter*, December 1976, p. 90.

This is what explained his subsequent disillusion with the Labour Party, as he and Eden decided that they could no longer rely on the right's leading figures to stem the rising tide. The two men joined forces with one of Crosland's political advisers, David Carlton, to create 'a small, extra-parliamentary group on the Right' that could counteract the 'influence of left-wing extremism'.<sup>590</sup> Haseler and Carlton initially asked Brian Walden, an MP already somewhat alienated from parliamentary life, to speak out on their behalf, but after he refused they approached the shadow employment secretary, Reg Prentice, shortly before the party conference in October 1973. Prentice was, in many ways, an inspired choice. He was, as he explained five years later, a confirmed Gaitskellite, who admired the late leader for his courage and principle. Gaitskell's victories, Prentice proclaimed, were 'a triumph of moderation over extremism'. He 'never stopped fighting. He led from the front. In the early 1960s he was gaining in prestige and authority all the time'.<sup>591</sup> Martial values aside, Prentice was clearly not 'part of an Oxbridge élite' or indeed a factionalist, which precluded him from becoming a member of Roy Jenkins's 'set'.<sup>592</sup> Indeed, he was regarded initially as a favourite of Crosland, prompting Jenkins to remark caustically that the latter 'erected him into a kind of proletarian oracle' whose views should be treated as 'socialist gospel'.<sup>593</sup>

Prentice also shared with Crosland and Haseler the habit of disdainng 'moderate' politics if it meant spurning 'radical', populist solutions. Back in 1970, for example, he had rebuked the outgoing Labour Government for 'falling short of our socialist standards', adding that, although not of the left, he felt it 'had shifted too far to the right' and 'made too much of a virtue of pragmatism'.<sup>594</sup> As a minister in that Government he had refused to publicly back

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<sup>590</sup> Geoff Horn, *Crossing the Floor: Reg Prentice and the Crisis of Social Democracy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Manchester, 2015), p. 50.

<sup>591</sup> Reg Prentice, 'Right Turn', in Patrick Cormack (ed.), *Right Turn: Eight Men who Changed Their Minds* (London, 1978), p. 2.

<sup>592</sup> Horn, *Crossing the Floor*, p. 50.

<sup>593</sup> Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, p. 420.

<sup>594</sup> Reg Prentice, 'Not Socialist Enough', *Political Quarterly*, 41:2 (1970), pp. 147-8.

the war in Vietnam, and resigned because he felt not enough financial aid was being given to developing countries. His dissatisfaction with the *ancien régime* was, of course, analogous to Haseler's earlier toying with leftism as part of a wider Labourist agenda, but – and again like Haseler – he soon found himself opportunistically changing his tune; by July 1973 he had confided to the psephologist Anthony King that, although he still felt that governments imbued far too much of the establishmentarian viewpoint held by upper-middle class civil servants, he was now of the belief that the party was 'drifting too far to the left'.<sup>595</sup>

A month after first meeting Haseler and his associates, Prentice gave a speech at County Hall in London in which he urged 'centre-right moderates' to 'stand up and be counted', expressing the frustration that 'too many of our sensible people have drifted into the role of onlookers. They have allowed the left wing to make the running and given a false impression of what the Labour Party is really all about.'<sup>596</sup> He was particularly scathing about his fellow MPs, who he believed had opted to remain quiet 'in the interests of party unity'.<sup>597</sup> Haseler and Eden tried to assist him – and pre-empt the possibility of Prentice's dismissal from the Shadow Cabinet – by drafting a jointly-signed letter celebrating his decision to speak out as a 'show of moral courage from a leader of first-rank stature'.<sup>598</sup> Many of the twenty-four signatories had their roots in municipal London politics, and none were senior parliamentary figures. Intended for the news desk of *The Times*, on Goodwin's advice Haseler agreed to send it privately to Harold Wilson's office.<sup>599</sup> What made this episode noteworthy was the leaking of the letter's contents to the *Sunday Express*, which published it as a front-page splash on 25 November 1973; having picked up the evening edition

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<sup>595</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 2/7 – Transcript of interview with Anthony King, July 1973.

<sup>596</sup> *Times*, 24 November 1973.

<sup>597</sup> The Editors, 'Debating Labour's Policies – 1. What Reg Prentice Actually Said', *Socialist Commentary*, January 1974.

<sup>598</sup> BLPES, Eden, 7 – Letter: Sir Reginald Goodwin *et al* to Harold Wilson, 27 November 1973.

<sup>599</sup> *Times*, 4 December 1973.

beforehand, Wilson was allegedly sent into a panic in the belief that this was a plot organised by Jenkins, only calming down the following morning.<sup>600</sup>

Prentice was not dismissed from the opposition front bench as feared, and after Labour's narrow victory in the February 1974 general election he was appointed Secretary of State for Education and Science. His relationship with many fellow revisionists in the Cabinet was by now seriously strained. Although he still remained on good terms with Shirley Williams and, perhaps more surprisingly, Jenkins – his 'only consistent supporter', he admitted – he abhorred the supposedly disunited front shown by Crosland, James Callaghan and the 'cynical' Denis Healey, while dismissing pragmatically-minded right-wingers such as Merlyn Rees as belonging to the 'soft centre'.<sup>601</sup> Unlike most of his colleagues, Prentice was also unequivocal in public about the fact that a Labour Government had to be led from the right. In a speech he gave on July 1974, for instance, he spoke of how only the 'moderate Labour tradition' could act as a government of national unity, traditions that were 'those of Ernest Bevin and Hugh Gaitskell – the traditions which have prevailed within every Labour Government since the war and will surely prevail in the future.'<sup>602</sup>

Over the next year Prentice gained a reputation as a harshly critical rogue element within Labour's parliamentary coalition. His *modus operandi* was to speak out on standard issues that would appeal to older, traditional-minded voters. For example, he frequently commented on patriotism, stating in a press release in early 1975 that he wanted to see 'young people in our schools and colleges growing up with a deep love of our country and pride in its heritage'.<sup>603</sup> Another preoccupation was the 'rule of law', which Prentice was eager to defend from the ranks of *gauchiste* insurrectionaries and militant trade unionists

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<sup>600</sup> BLPES, Eden, 7 – Douglas Eden's note to the 'Goodwin letter', February 2009; *Sunday Express*, 25 November 1973.

<sup>601</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 6/17 – 'Rubicon papers', chapter six of unpublished autobiography, undated, pp. 4-5, 22.

<sup>602</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 2/7 – Extract from speech, 20 July 1974; *Guardian*, 29 July 1974.

<sup>603</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 2/7 – 'Press notice', 2 January 1975.

during a period of prolonged industrial disputes. He already had form on this, having provoked outrage in January 1974 by admonishing the Communist vice-president of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), Mick McGahey, for talking about pay disputes during the miners' strike as though they were 'part of the struggle for the overthrow of society', an outburst that led the hard-left MP Syd Bidwell to censure Prentice in turn for endangering the 'spirit of unity and vigour in the party' with his 'continuous line of criticism'.<sup>604</sup>

Prentice's actions were strongly swayed by the direction in which Haseler was himself heading, the latter's advice and 'regular supply of analysis' proving crucial in supplying the long-term strategy that the older man needed.<sup>605</sup> On the matter of EEC membership, for example – where Prentice had, like Haseler, been a right-wing 'anti' during the 1971 debates – they realised that with most of the Labour right, the Liberals and the Conservatives now in favour of remaining in the Community, the coming referendum campaign (scheduled for June 1975) would be presented as a struggle between 'moderate', pro-European parliamentary democrats on one hand and anti-Market 'extremist' ideologues on the other (see chapter one). Although Haseler remained an opponent of membership, they agreed that Prentice should publicly recant his previous opinions: from mid-1974 onwards he expressed his opposition firstly to the referendum proposal itself and then, in February 1975, to the very idea of Britain leaving the EEC, proclaiming that 'our vision has always been wider than Europe, but it has surely never excluded Europe.'<sup>606</sup> Haseler later confessed that his reasoning behind this tactic – which garnered a lot of publicity, if nothing else – was that if the right campaigned *en masse* for 'Yes' in the referendum it would provoke the left into an attempted purge, potentially creating the conditions for a realignment.<sup>607</sup>

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<sup>604</sup> *Times*, 21 January 1974; LHASC, PLP papers – PLP meeting minutes, 24 January 1974.

<sup>605</sup> Horn, *Crossing the Floor*, p. 88.

<sup>606</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 2/7 – Press Release, 12 May 1975.

<sup>607</sup> Horn, *Crossing the Floor*, pp. 90-1.

As it happened, Prentice did not need the dislocation wrought by the referendum to help connive a left-right split. Such an opportunity was found closer to home, where a group of Trotskyist activists in his Newham constituency had long been attempting to deselect him as an MP. Prentice maintained he had been scapegoated because he ‘was leading the fight against the left’ and ‘stating [his] case all over the country’; his accusers, on the other hand, insisted that he did not reflect the views of party members, a point that Prentice himself later conceded when he acknowledged that the Trotskyists’ deselection strategy was only viable because of the backing they received from a bedrock of ‘old-fashioned’ left-wingers in the CLP, formerly supporters of his, who felt he ‘had strayed too far from socialism.’<sup>608</sup> The outcome of this battle was potentially far-reaching for every Labour MP, as a precedent was now being set for left-wing activists to effect a fundamental change in the composition of the PLP, with consequences both for the party’s electability and its ideological character. As one recent revisionist recruit to the Commons, Bryan Magee, wrote in the *Times*:

... it would be wrong if the left wing of the Labour movement were allowed to dominate it since it represents only a small and untypical minority... If the Labour Party is to remain a part of government it must continue to represent the views and interests of many broad groups in society, and these must include the millions of Labour voters whose attitudes are roughly similar to those of Mr Reg Prentice.<sup>609</sup>

After months of public wrangling, at a meeting in July 1975 the general management committee (GMC) voted by a margin of 29 votes to 19 to deny Prentice reselection, despite a petition by the PLP that garnered 161 signatures.<sup>610</sup>

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<sup>608</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 6/17 – ‘Rubicon papers’, chapter seven, undated, p.11.

<sup>609</sup> *Times*, 23 July 1975.

<sup>610</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 2/6 – Press release with list of MPs, 16 July 1975.

Nevertheless, the ongoing rumble of controversy surrounding Prentice's battle with the left suited his most ardent followers, as it fortified their own political identity and aided their ambitions. Publicly, he was on the receiving end of much applause for his fighting spirit: in the days immediately following his condemnation of the trade unions for trying to 'welsh' on the social contract (see chapter three), his postbag bulged with congratulations from party supporters and trade unionists who applauded him on his 'bravery' and 'courage' ('We are in the Labour Party for fair play, to fight bullies and greed', said one) and urged a return to a 'Hugh Gaitskill [sic] type of Labour policy'.<sup>611</sup> One well-wisher particularly keen to capitalise on the furore was Douglas Eden, who had already written to Prentice asserting that 'now we shall have to press ahead with [a] new extra-parliamentary group with, if possible, even greater determination.'<sup>612</sup> He and Haseler had by this time resigned their posts on the GLC administration, accusing the Labour Group publicly of 'vacillation, compromise and weak leadership', and both men took advantage of the resulting press interest by announcing the launch of their new organisation, the Social Democratic Alliance, in June 1975.<sup>613</sup>

Prentice publicly announced that the formation of the SDA was 'long overdue', and he would 'be prepared to speak for it on any platform'.<sup>614</sup> But he was the only senior politician to endorse it; most of the group's 'initial supporters' derived once more from the worlds of municipal and grassroots politics, and were of a 'traditional' rather than an explicitly 'intellectual', revisionist stamp.<sup>615</sup> An exception was Peter Stephenson, the editor of the monthly journal *Socialist Commentary*, who was installed as chairman, while Haseler,

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<sup>611</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 2/5 – Letter: J.T. Shaw to Reg Prentice, 3 May 1975; Letter: Chris Muir to Reg Prentice, 3 May 1975.

<sup>612</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 2/5 – Letter: Douglas Eden to Reg Prentice, 3 March 1975.

<sup>613</sup> BLPES, Eden, 2 – Press release, 29 April 1975; *Guardian*, 18 June 1975.

<sup>614</sup> *Times*, 16 June 1975.

<sup>615</sup> LHASC, David Candler (CAN) papers – 'Initial List of Supporters', 17 June 1975.

Eden and David Carlton all assumed positions on the group's executive body.<sup>616</sup> The manifesto that accompanied the SDA's launch refrained from challenging revisionist nostrums, stating blandly that a 'modern social-democratic party' should 'seek its support primarily from working people' while simultaneously aiming towards a 'classless society'. Its key objectives included support for the mixed economy, the inviolability of parliamentary democracy and the rule of law, free speech and 'individual liberty of thought', and a free trade union movement.<sup>617</sup> These were unexceptionable to all moderates, even if the emphasis on safeguarding freedom seemed to predominate over other goals – although some potential supporters, such as the financier Siegmund Warburg, were disappointed by the document's failure to 'make an inspiring impression'.<sup>618</sup>

The group's opening salvo came shortly before Labour's annual conference in late-September 1975, when they published a four-page 'newsletter' which claimed that 11 members of the NEC had communist associations; included in that number were Cabinet members Judith Hart and Michael Foot, whose crimes were to write occasional opinion pieces for the *Morning Star*, while even less offensive figures – such as the moderate railwaymen's union leader Sid Weighell – were rebuked for performing similar services for *Labour Monthly*, an obscure journal that until recently had been edited by the communist intellectual Palme Dutt.<sup>619</sup> The offending document had first been circulated at a rally for Prentice, who delivered a speech demanding 'aggressive self-assertion by social democrats', imploring his audience to join the SDA and build it 'into one of the really powerful forces in

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<sup>616</sup> LHASC, CAN – 'SDA Chairman's Letter', August 1975.

<sup>617</sup> BLPES, Siegmund Warburg papers, 7/62 – 'The Social Democratic Alliance: A Manifesto', undated [June 1975].

<sup>618</sup> BLPES, Warburg, 7/62 – Note: S.G. Warburg to Eric Roll, 11 August 1975.

<sup>619</sup> LHASC, CAN – 'East Wind Over Blackpool', 28 September 1975.

British politics'.<sup>620</sup> According to press reports, he endorsed the findings of the newsletter and defended them publicly, although he later claimed to have had 'no part' in its drafting.<sup>621</sup>

The reaction to these events was uniformly negative. Harold Wilson described the SDA as 'McCarthyite', and in his conference address he referred to an 'anti-party group which has been disporting itself in Blackpool this weekend, leaking... their smears to an ever-ready Tory press'.<sup>622</sup> Several moderate Cabinet ministers were reportedly shocked by the newsletter's criticism of the centrist Ted Short for his defence of the Clay Cross rebels (who were engaged in a dispute with the Government over the recently introduced Housing Finance Act), while both Roy Jenkins and Shirley Williams quickly rushed to disavow any association with the group.<sup>623</sup> Even more disastrous was the impact the uproar had on its fledgling membership. Peter Stephenson stepped down as chair on 7 October, alleging 'personal and policy differences' between himself and 'the other officers.'<sup>624</sup> Leading figures such as Jim Cattermole, the influential party organiser for the East Midlands region, and David Candler soon followed Stephenson out of the door. Candler, formerly Wilson's press officer, stated in his resignation letter that his misgivings had begun with the publication of the manifesto in June, to be made 'only too apparent by subsequent events and activities'.<sup>625</sup>

The SDA put on a brave face in the aftermath of this debacle, producing a further circular after the conference which boasted of being 'the largest grass-roots political grouping of individuals within the Labour Party'.<sup>626</sup> But the damage had already been done: the *Guardian* journalist Peter Jenkins described the SDA as 'amateur as it is sinister', excoriating Haseler as a 'failed political Svengali', while The *Economist*, echoing Wilson's conference

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<sup>620</sup> *Times*, 29 September 1975.

<sup>621</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 6/17 – 'Rubicon papers', chapter eight, undated, p. 2.

<sup>622</sup> Labour Party, *Report of the 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference*, 1975, p. 187.

<sup>623</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 6/17 – 'Rubicon papers', chapter eight, undated, p. 2.

<sup>624</sup> *Times*, 8 October 1975.

<sup>625</sup> LHASC, CAN – Letter: David Candler to the SDA Executive, 14 November 1975.

<sup>626</sup> LHASC, CAN – SDA circular letter to all supporters, 20 October 1975.

address, described them as ‘extreme moderates’.<sup>627</sup> Their maladroit displays of Machiavellianism extended to deceiving those within their own circle, who were not sufficiently informed of the Alliance’s true intent. Stephenson later admitted that he did not understand why Haseler and Eden were ‘obsessed with the idea of communist infiltration’, which he felt was a ‘pseudo-problem’, and he – together with staunch Labour loyalists like Cattermole and Candler – were seemingly kept in the dark about their strategic objectives.<sup>628</sup> While there were already some who realised that the SDA was just as unhappy with the right as they were with the left, it was up to Peter Jenkins to spell it out. ‘There is not much doubt’, he wrote, ‘that unbeknown to a good many solid Labour Party people... who signed up for the cause, some of the [SDA] officers are intent on splitting the party.’<sup>629</sup>

### **From ‘Labourism’ to Thatcherism**

The flurry of negative headlines over the Prentice fiasco prompted the SDA to go into partial retreat. Haseler remained as secretary of the group and continued his duties as a councillor on the GLC, but now returned to his original career as an academic and political commentator. A new book, *The Death of British Democracy*, was published in 1976: it continued to glorify Labourism as the ‘basic value-system of the British working class’ while reviling moderate Labour politicians for their ineffectiveness.<sup>630</sup> A year later, Haseler was awarded a visiting fellowship at Georgetown University in Washington D. C., where his observations of the American political system fortified him in the view that British politics was in dire need of transformation. Choosing to jettison any last vestiges of fealty to the Labour Party, Haseler

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<sup>627</sup> *Guardian*, 1 October 1975; *Economist*, 4 October 1975.

<sup>628</sup> *Guardian*, 17 November 1976.

<sup>629</sup> *Guardian*, 1 October 1975.

<sup>630</sup> Haseler, *Death of British Democracy*, p. 140.

gradually substituted his earlier attempts to fashion a working-class Labourist ideology for a wholly 'populist' perspective, which retained his earlier antagonism towards the 'Establishment' but retracted 'working-class sentiment' in favour of the less sectarian notions embodied in the phrase 'ordinary people'.

The main reason for this shift was his conclusion that the hegemony enjoyed by social-democrats since the end of the Second World War was no longer simply under threat – it was *over*. As he explained in 1976, this had been the 'old future',

a future that was to be buried and laid to rest as the tensions of the sixties and the convulsions of the seventies wrenched British politics from out of the past; whatever medium term future is seen, it possesses few of the political characteristics of a flourishing, prosperous and liberal democracy.<sup>631</sup>

His response was a mixture of regret at the passing of a once-triumphant era and contempt for the decayed state in which social-democracy now found itself. For although the post-war order was an 'ingenious political construct' that had ushered in a sedate bipartisan political framework, high economic growth, increased public expenditure and liberal social values, it had been laid low by the 'socialist generation' and their 'loss of integrity as a political tradition'.<sup>632</sup> While, on the surface, this seemed like yet another attack on the Wilson Government for its numerous disappointments, it was in fact a condemnation of the party as a whole for conspiring to ruin 1950s social-democracy by abandoning Gaitskellism and moving sharply to the left. This not only had consequences for his commitment to existing

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<sup>631</sup> Stephen Haseler, 'Can Britain Avoid a Marxist Future?', *Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, April 1976, p. 150.

<sup>632</sup> Haseler, 'Can British Socialism Survive?', p. 87; Stephen Haseler, 'The British Form of Decline', *Quadrant*, 21:7 (1977), p. 14.

revisionist pieties; it also served to put himself at odds with both the Labour left *and* the old-style revisionists from the right who defended the *status quo*.

Thus, having once found themselves united in their antipathy to ‘liberal socialists’, Haseler now accused Anthony Crosland of fetishising equality, turning it from a demand necessary for any kind of social justice into an unquestioned article of faith. Despite reasserting that it was a good thing if ‘men of the democratic left’ continued to dislike the ‘petty snobberies which disfigure social and class relations in Britain’, he argued that Crosland had gone further, quoting the latter’s conclusion in *The Future of Socialism* that ‘equality of opportunity and social mobility... are not enough’. This harking for ‘total equality’, as Haseler understood it, was at the root of the country’s problems: it led the social-democrats into an ‘increasing intellectual fog’, as they embraced state action ‘through the education system, taxation, public ownership (of various kinds) and centralised planning’. Not only had this fallacy eroded individual freedom, but it also stopped unreformed revisionists from properly appreciating the virtues of capitalism – although acceding to it in theory, they concentrated on ‘denouncing, guarding against, or correcting its deficiencies’.<sup>633</sup> Hence Crosland’s economic ‘misjudgements’, such as not attacking the leftist *Labour’s Programme for 1973* strongly enough and his opposition to spending cuts during the IMF loan crisis three years later; he had, in Haseler’s view, become so committed to high levels of public expenditure as a guiding principle that he neglected to define what ‘the exact measure of the mix’ of state and private sector involvement in the economy should be.<sup>634</sup>

The irony was that, on all of these points, Haseler was in keeping with the position of John Mackintosh – the archetypal ‘élitist’ Marketeer who had so strongly rebutted *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisionism* just five years previously. But whereas the Jenkinsites who

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<sup>633</sup> Stephen Haseler, ‘Europe: The Collapse of the Social Democrats’, *Commentary*, December 1977, p. 44.

<sup>634</sup> Haseler, *Death of British Democracy*, p. 154.

argued for a tilting of the equilibrium away from equality and towards liberty had done so because they were concerned about personal freedom as a universal value, Haseler's critique also contained an abiding populist sentiment, which was maintained on the grounds that ordinary people had themselves tired of demands for further equality and wished for more freedom. In *The Death of British Democracy* he argued that social-democracy must remain both populist and egalitarian as well as pluralist, so that any liberalisation measures would therefore be justified only if they reflected mass opinion: this, as he conceded, could in practice lead to some illiberal measures, such as tougher sentences for criminals, but if 'liberty' was to have any value then it meant allowing the public to demand such things without being condemned as 'reactionary' by progressives.<sup>635</sup> He also launched yet another swipe at élitist Fabian values, whose adherents continued to govern 'rationally' on the basis that they knew what was best for the citizen. This, noted Ronald Butt of the *Times*, was a very different proposition to what 'Mr [Roy] Jenkins and the archetypal social democrats' would be willing to endorse.<sup>636</sup>

Haseler's contention that the gradual fragmentation of the post-war settlement was a revisionist *trahison des clercs* did not mean, however, he was willing to spare those who remained wedded to a more 'traditionalist' or 'Labourist' worldview either. For example, although his previous inattention towards the trade-unions had by this stage been rectified, the conclusions were far from complementary. Despite grudgingly acknowledging that 'unions have protected their members from some of the excesses of an unbridled free-market system', he went on to describe them as an 'interest group' which 'cajoles and bullies its members', and bemoaned the 'emotional and psychological' attachment that left-wingers had towards them.<sup>637</sup> He also scorned those he termed 'practical' social-democrats, as opposed to

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<sup>635</sup> Haseler, *Death of British Democracy*, pp. 229, 232.

<sup>636</sup> *Times*, 6 May 1976.

<sup>637</sup> Haseler, 'British Form of Decline', p. 15.

‘ideological ones’ – an interesting analogue for the two poles of traditionalism and revisionism. The former, he argued in a letter to the *Times*, must bear their share of the responsibility for the party’s abject collapse into inertia; by ‘accept[ing] what is at any given time’, they acted as a stultifying influence just when the country needed politicians ‘whose actions are anchored in principle and who are directional in their politics as well as managerial’. It was for this reason that he could not – unlike Crosland – rally to James Callaghan’s standard: although the new Prime Minister seemed to have many necessary populist *bona fides*, such as his working-man’s social conservatism and support for the armed forces, his lack of strategic vision and indifference to ideas disqualified him in Haseler’s eyes, as did the new Government’s general aversion to radical change and apparent unwillingness to challenge the unions. Social-democracy, he reiterated, needed ‘stomach for a political fight’ if it was to be retrieved from the mire, but this was something that ‘practical men’ such as Callaghan did not have.<sup>638</sup>

These ideas, when discussed in the form of a newspaper opinion column or a short article, often appeared convincing if frequently polemical in tone. But they sometimes suffered from a lack of coherence: Haseler’s intellectual capriciousness and trust in instinctive rather than reasoned understanding, which made him adept at intuiting shifts in the political landscape, did not necessarily translate into a disciplined or sustainable critique. Nor was he always willing to convey the same message to different audiences, or maintain consistency between his earlier and current output. This was perhaps to be expected from a man who had no qualms in loudly espousing causes, such as opposition to the EEC, and then discarding them when they clashed with his ambitions for the long-term future of British politics. But sometimes the contradictions were all too apparent: the shrill condemnation of the party’s ‘socialist generation’, for example, again jarred with his continuing veneration of

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<sup>638</sup> *Times*, 25 February 1977.

Gaitskell, who had led the party for eight years in the period when their worldview was arguably at its most dominant. His *post-hoc* reasoning that Gaitskell had been betrayed by his allies in the early 1960s was both unashamedly partial and at times hyperbolic, although it did give an insight into the contempt he held for those who had failed his hero through their ‘intellectual and political cowardice’.<sup>639</sup>

More importantly, if he was keen to denounce Labour politicians such as Crosland for seeking to shield the working population from capitalism, then questions could be asked as to whether he was still legitimately a revisionist or social-democrat of any stripe. Haseler seems to have remained unperturbed about crossing any such ideological boundaries, not least because he regarded one of the salient characteristics of his creed to be its relative lack of definition: ‘I have always half-suspected that social-democracy, even at the time of its greatest vigour, was so eclectic as to possess no meaning in the sense that “liberalism” or “fascism” or “Communism” does’. He did not consider this to be an impediment, for such ‘philosophic incoherence’ gave revisionism its ‘grounding in humanity’ and sense of ethical purpose.<sup>640</sup> The problem, in his view, was that the present generation of ‘notoriously inadequate’ social-democrats in the party could not take advantage of the opportunities presented to them by the current situation, as was shown in their ‘marked inability to progress beyond comfortable and conventionally trite concepts.’<sup>641</sup>

It is this sense of how malleable Haseler perceived his creed to be that at least partly explains his lack of sentimentality about the Labour party. Although he had once written that the ‘strength of the Right in Labour politics... lay in its appeal to loyalty and Party unity’, he no longer seemed willing to abide by such precepts if they came between him and a point of honour or opportunity for advantage.<sup>642</sup> This was illustrated at the beginning of 1976, when

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<sup>639</sup> Haseler, ‘Can British Socialism Survive?’, p. 89.

<sup>640</sup> Haseler, ‘Europe’, p. 44.

<sup>641</sup> Haseler, *Death of British Democracy*, p. 152.

<sup>642</sup> Haseler, *Gaitskellites*, p. 6.

he and Eden announced their refusal to stand again as Labour candidates in the following year's GLC election, in protest at the control of the party organisation in London by the 'extreme left'. In their statement to the press, references abounded to the 'hollow men' of the right and their 'sickening immobility in the face of threats to liberal-democratic values and freedoms'.<sup>643</sup> A showdown came later that year, when the council's leaders signed a motion calling for the party whip to be withdrawn from both men, on the grounds that they had been responsible for a resolution put forward by Eden which demanded that the leadership declare its 'unqualified support' for the principle of one-man-one-vote in future elections. This was contrary to the position held by the GLC Labour Group, but was supported by the Conservative opposition.<sup>644</sup> The vote to expel them from the group was passed by 41 votes to 15 on 24 May.

Another factor that shaped Haseler's increasingly 'disloyal' attitude was the role he played in inducing the long, drawn-out defection of Reg Prentice from the Labour to Conservative parties. By now thoroughly disaffected, in December 1976 Prentice resigned from his role in the Cabinet as minister for overseas development, citing the terms of the IMF loan and a sense of 'drift' in government as the main factors behind his decision.<sup>645</sup> In his resignation letter he reiterated how much he was now in favour of 'a realignment – the need for a moderate centre-left party to represent the millions of traditional Labour voters who were repelled by the new extremism.'<sup>646</sup> Haseler and Douglas Eden were instrumental in helping Prentice reach this watershed. The former had written to him approximately a week beforehand, stating that there was a 'powerful case for resigning': as well as setting out the various strategies in which this could be achieved to maximum effect, he reminded Prentice that his main objective should be to 'create the small group of back-benchers who could

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<sup>643</sup> BLPES, Eden, 2 – Press statement, 9 March 1976.

<sup>644</sup> BLPES, Eden, 3 – Speech at Council, 4 May 1976; Press Release, 19 May 1976.

<sup>645</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 2/9 – Letter: Reg Prentice to James Callaghan, 21 December 1976.

<sup>646</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 6/17 – 'Rubicon papers', chapter nine, undated, p. 2.

conceivably bring down the govt.’<sup>647</sup> Eden was more specific, stating that if the NEC passed a motion ‘supporting Marxism’ on 15 December, as expected, it would ‘represent a high-watermark of appeasement of the Left’, thereafter presenting an opportunity for Prentice to ‘move out of the Government and begin forging your group on the backbenches’.<sup>648</sup>

Neither Eden nor Haseler made it clear who they expected to join this cabal of malcontents, but Prentice mentioned Brian Walden and John Mackintosh – both of whom had recently rebelled over the Dock Work Regulation Bill – as two Labour MPs who had been notified of his decision beforehand and were in favour. Nothing came of it, and Prentice spent the next ten months skulking in Westminster as a *de facto* independent MP (although he continued to take the Labour whip). Asked by the television interviewer Robin Day which party he now identified with, he responded by stating that he was ‘not a Conservative’, although he was forced to admit that he could vote with them in ‘some extreme circumstances’.<sup>649</sup> In fact, he had come to the conclusion that a ‘Marxist society’ beckoned should a ‘socialist’ Government be re-elected, and in October 1977 – after liaising with the backbench Conservative MP Patrick Cormack – he announced that he would ‘cross the floor’ and join the ‘Tories’ after all.<sup>650</sup> Prentice denied that his attitudes had changed, and many of his closest allies agreed with him: Walden, who had according to Charles Moore once pondered defecting prior to leaving parliament himself, commented in the *Spectator* that Prentice was ‘a typical right-winger, who differed not one jot from his comrades, except that they kept their mouths shut and he did not.’<sup>651</sup> But others thought differently. Roy Jenkins

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<sup>647</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 2/9 – Letter: Stephen Haseler to Reg Prentice, undated [December 1976].

<sup>648</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 2/9 – Letter: Douglas Eden to Reg Prentice, 11 December 1976.

<sup>649</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 6/17 – ‘Rubicon papers’, chapter nine, undated, p. 1.

<sup>650</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 2/9 – ‘Statement by Reg Prentice M.P.’, 8 October 1977; David Linden, ‘Political Converts: Ideological Travellers from Left to Right, 1975-1992’, *Ex-Historia* (2007), p. 197.

<sup>651</sup> Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorised Biography, Volume I* (London, 2013), p. 345; Brian Walden, ‘After Prentice, who’s next?’, *Spectator*, 15 October 1977.

reflected upon hearing the news that '[Prentice] is in a curious way an extremist, not a moderate at all', likening him to 'a heavy-footed elephant crashing through the jungle'.<sup>652</sup>

The notion that there were various means to achieve 'social-democratic' ends – even if that meant working with historic enemies – now became a trademark of Haseler's tactics, and he went so far as to attack those right-wing Labour politicians who made a totem of refusing to co-operate with the Conservatives, stating that the likes of Roy Hattersley had 'more in common with Mrs Thatcher' than with left-wingers such as Eric Heffer.<sup>653</sup> His own first tentative steps in that direction took place shortly after Prentice's Cabinet resignation. Dining with the shadow defence secretary Ian Gilmour in February 1977, Haseler suggested that there were a 'dozen or so' right-wing Labour MPs who 'take Reg Prentice's view of the world', and that they would be keen to help remove the Government if the Conservatives promised to give them a 'free run' at the next election. Gilmour noticed that Haseler remained vague about the details, but was suitably impressed by his proposal to inform the Opposition leader, Margaret Thatcher, of their meeting, remarking in a letter that it flagged up the issue of how the party should seek to deal with such disgruntled moderates – especially if they could learn lessons on how to appeal to 'ordinary Labour supporters' as well as MPs.<sup>654</sup> Thatcher replied by stating that she was anxious to meet Haseler, referring to his recent work as 'first class', and her political secretary Richard Ryder – although admitting to misgivings about Haseler and Eden – soon offered to arrange a meeting on 'neutral territory'.<sup>655</sup>

Haseler wrote to Thatcher for the first time in July, while on his sabbatical in Washington D.C. There he sketched out his basic philosophy and how this could be translated

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<sup>652</sup> Roy Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977-1981* (London, 1989), p. 153.

<sup>653</sup> Haseler, *Death of British Democracy*, p. 148.

<sup>654</sup> CAC, Margaret Thatcher (THCR) papers, 2/1/1/23 – Letter: Ian Gilmour to Margaret Thatcher, 24 February 1977.

<sup>655</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/1/1/23 – Letter: Margaret Thatcher to Ian Gilmour, 25 February 1977; Note: Richard Ryder to Margaret Thatcher, 28 February 1977.

into a Conservative appeal to the country. Announcing proudly that he came from a ‘Gaitskell tradition of politics... abandoned by its heirs’, he argued that any such attempts to ‘reconstruct’ British politics could not be on the centre ground, which was insufficiently rigorous as a concept and filled with ‘so-called moderates’ who were ‘intellectually bankrupt’ and ‘politically compromised’. To turn the Conservatives into a ‘genuinely popular party’, Haseler reiterated Prentice’s insistence that a new constituency had to be developed out of those ‘traditional’ Labour voters who had been abandoned by the Gadarene rush to the left, in the process breaking ‘that deep historical, residual affinity’ they had for a party that ‘no longer properly represents working-class voters’. It was in describing how Thatcher could unleash this new ‘Tory populism’ that Haseler got rather over-excited: ‘You, perhaps, could develop the notion that these ordinary people are HELD UNDER, RESTRICTED IN THEIR DEVELOPMENT, BOSSED AROUND, by a new form of bossism – the bossism of the trade union leaders, the civil servants, the state bureaucracies.’<sup>656</sup> This was a broadside against the rational nature of conventional politics and its reliance on technocratic, planning-based models of governance. But his point had wider implications: to depict the Labour Party as the creature of an old establishment imprisoned by the world it had created, while simultaneously reaffirming the virtue of the halcyon days experienced under Gaitskell.

Haseler stressed in the letter that any movements in this direction had to be permanent: the Conservative Party, he said, should aim to emerge as the ‘dominant party in the state, rather like the Democrats in the U.S.’<sup>657</sup> Throughout their correspondence, he provided Thatcher with analyses of how the Conservatives could best communicate messages that would resonate with the public. First, it was essential that the party comprehend the scale of disaffection with contemporary politicians. It was, he said, ‘a lack of populist leadership

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<sup>656</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – Letter: Stephen Haseler to Margaret Thatcher, 25 July 1977.

<sup>657</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – Letter: Stephen Haseler to Margaret Thatcher, 25 July 1977.

[that caused] a shutting of the people out of politics by considering their views to be worthless'. The remedy was to appeal directly to the people over the heads of Members of Parliament, which he believed would secure the loyalties of significant numbers of ex-Labour voters and those who did not vote. One way to achieve this, he proposed, was to use the referendum mechanism more widely when in government, especially as a last resort to 'rally the people' if elements within the party were proving troublesome. This, he conceded, risked accusations that the party was acting in a 'Gaullist' fashion – but 'We in Britain could do with a bit of Gaullism'.<sup>658</sup>

Failing that, the most effective way of changing minds was to tackle issues that addressed their concerns. Immigration and 'law and order' were two Haseler identified from the very beginning: both were of great importance to the working-class, were already established as salient issues which the Conservatives had previously highlighted to good effect at elections, and would – crucially – present Labour as a party of élitist 'Rolls-Royce Socialists' who ignored the 'strong feelings' of the electorate on these matters. Education was another subject that could arouse similar reactions, he suggested – 'there is a real revolt going on about general permissiveness and the lack of discipline in our schools'.<sup>659</sup> Haseler's colleague Eden, meanwhile, prepared a further document that focused on the mechanics of targeting the 'populist constituency', identifying the deployment of words and phrases such as 'liberty', 'freedom' and 'personal rights' as a necessary part of any rhetoric that could woo it.<sup>660</sup>

It was Eden, rather than Haseler, who addressed what was arguably the most pressing subject of them all – how to counteract the influence of the trade-unions. He drafted a dossier in 1978 that analysed the unions' role in the Labour Party, making it clear that the 'Labour

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<sup>658</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/133 – Letter: Stephen Haseler to Margaret Thatcher, 24 October 1977.

<sup>659</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/133 – Letter: Stephen Haseler to Margaret Thatcher, 24 October 1977.

<sup>660</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – Douglas Eden, 'Some Observations on Appealing to the Populist Constituency in the Pre-Election Phase', undated [1978].

machine' was in the hands of the wider movement. Eden portrayed the beleaguered revisionist wing as careerists who would be too engrossed in the future leadership race once Callaghan had resigned to consider making changes in such difficult circumstances; the only possibility that would stop them from accommodating extremism still further was a fightback by the unions themselves, involving either the EETPU under Frank Chapple or the engineering workers, which might in turn lead to a split.<sup>661</sup> An accompanying paper fleshed out the means by which the Conservatives could take advantage of this situation: as well as dissecting the internal strife that existed within the TUC, it posited that criticism of the unions should be aimed at the 'bosses and bureaucracies, to demonstrate the real conflict of interest between them as a new class and the rank-and-file trade unionist'. Intemperate attacks were thus discouraged, and Eden felt that workers' loyalty could be secured by enacting a round of constitutional reforms to promote their rights, including ballots for 'key union elections'.<sup>662</sup>

In addition to supplying information at close quarters, Haseler also offered to write a 'general, theoretical speech' on the 'yawning gap between the beliefs and values of "progressive, elite" leftists and the ordinary people'.<sup>663</sup> In November 1977, Ryder confirmed that 'the boss would be very pleased' for him to undergo such a task, adding that Thatcher had stipulated the use of 'populist language' in the text.<sup>664</sup> Haseler completed a draft within a month: it was, he explained, an attempt to 'synthesise most of the points of my recent notes', with the instruction that it could be used whole or as separately developed lines of attack during the election campaign.<sup>665</sup> Thatcher herself annotated the document, and it is interesting to note the sections that caught her attention. The aspects dwelling on patriotism and popular

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<sup>661</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – Douglas Eden, 'The Trade Unions and the State of the Labour Party', undated [1978].

<sup>662</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – Douglas Eden, 'The Trade Unions and Conservative Strategy', undated [1978].

<sup>663</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/133 – Letter: Stephen Haseler to Margaret Thatcher, 24 October 1977.

<sup>664</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/133 – Letter: Richard Ryder to Stephen Haseler, 9 November 1977.

<sup>665</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – Letter: Stephen Haseler to Margaret Thatcher, 6 December 1977.

democracy were repeatedly flagged up; both were within the bounds of conventional conservatism, and had been formulated by Haseler in a style vague enough to cohere with her aspirations for a national party appealing to all classes. More importantly, however, Thatcher's blue pen also hovered over the sections that voiced his disenchantment with social-democratic politics. Haseler's assertion that the present struggle was between 'popular values on the one hand and Socialism on the other', for example, was underlined, as was the section apportioning blame on an entire canon of left-wing intellectuals – Shaw, the Webbs, Laski, 'even Tawney' – who had 'sowed the seeds of our modern authoritarianism' and changed Labour 'from a party of the under-dog into a party of the establishment'.<sup>666</sup>

Although she seemingly never utilised the speech in its entirety, Thatcher's interaction with it testified to the value she placed on perspectives held by sympathetic *cognoscenti* from very different political traditions, and the uses to which they were put in capturing sections of Labour's voter base.<sup>667</sup> At the same time as Haseler was covertly offering advice, several other apostate social-democrats were getting involved in similar initiatives: Charles Moore mentions the important roles played by the historian Hugh Thomas and the former editor of the *New Statesman*, Paul Johnson, both of whom quickly became immersed in the Thatcherite milieu, while Woodrow Wyatt, like Haseler a frustrated Gaitskellite, had already published a book on the dangers caused by the 'perverted idealism' of the Labour left.<sup>668</sup> Witnessing these developments at close hand, the director of the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) 'think-tank', Alfred Sherman (himself an ex-Communist), argued that Conservative leaders could use the input of these 'academics and writers' to position themselves as the 'heirs to the Social-democratic Heritage' of Ernest Bevin and Keir Hardie,

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<sup>666</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/133 – 'Haseler file', January 1978.

<sup>667</sup> Brian Harrison, 'Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals', *Twentieth Century British History*, 5:2 (1994), pp. 217-20.

<sup>668</sup> Moore, *Margaret Thatcher, Volume 1*, pp. 346-7; Woodrow Wyatt, *What's Left of the Labour Party?* (London, 1977), p. 9.

thereby ‘open[ing] a path to our door’ for those among the wider electorate who were disillusioned with Labour.<sup>669</sup>

The party may not have gone that far, but there is nevertheless little doubt that Sherman’s entreaty to welcome converts was successful. Gallup polls, for instance, indicate that in the period leading up to the 1979 general election Labour voters were increasingly unlikely to identify with the policies associated with their own party, and had come to accept those adopted by the Conservatives instead.<sup>670</sup> On questions concerning crime, taxation and industrial relations, they agreed with the contents of the Conservative manifesto by considerable majorities. As the psephologist Anthony King remarked: ‘Seldom can a major party have penetrated so deeply into the political thinking of the other side’s staunchest supporters’.<sup>671</sup> Haseler had already noticed the value of using polls and surveys to gauge the changing mood: while still in North America, he had notified Ryder of the ‘sophisticated’ data available on a ‘range of issues [such as] immigration, law and order, Northern Ireland, education, housing, etc.’, which he believed gave a ‘measure of factual backing to what we know instinctively about public opinion’.<sup>672</sup>

Although both he and Eden remained eager to assist the Thatcherite project, from late 1978 onwards their activity seems to have ceased – they were, after all, in a ‘delicate situation politically’, and none of what they did could be made known to the public.<sup>673</sup> But had Haseler actually become a Conservative, as Ian Gilmour believed?<sup>674</sup> His residual hatred of class ‘privilege’ suggests otherwise: even shortly before the 1979 general election he continued to insist in the press that ‘the Conservatives are still unacceptable’ to the average Labour voter

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<sup>669</sup> Margaret Thatcher Foundation (MTF) – Letter: Alfred Sherman to Margaret Thatcher, 25 October 1977. (<https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/111990>)

<sup>670</sup> Dick Leonard, ‘Labour and the Voters’, in David Lipsey and Dick Leonard (eds), *The Socialist Agenda: Crosland’s Legacy* (London, 1981), pp. 48-9.

<sup>671</sup> *Observer*, 22 April 1979.

<sup>672</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – Letter: Stephen Haseler to Richard Ryder, 1 March 1978.

<sup>673</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – Letter: Stephen Haseler to Richard Ryder, 1 March 1978.

<sup>674</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/1/1/23 – Letter: Ian Gilmour to Margaret Thatcher, 24 February 1977.

for just that reason.<sup>675</sup> Instead, he extracted Thatcherism from Conservative thought in much the same way that he now understood his own form of populist, ‘Gaitskellite’ social-democracy to be extrinsic to Labour Party revisionism. Shifting the *zeitgeist* rightward was, for him, a desirable objective, but if democracy was to be protected then it necessitated a return to full-scale involvement in Labour’s internal affairs, which he embarked upon with renewed zeal.

### **Expulsion from the Labour Party**

While the SDA’s leaders were surreptitiously advising the enemy, the group itself had regained its strength following the adverse publicity surrounding its birth, and by 1977 its publications were boasting of an increase in membership to ‘about 800’ since its establishment two years previously.<sup>676</sup> After the Conservative victory at the polls, the SDA updated their original manifesto by publishing a ‘Statement of Aims’, which developed many of the themes Haseler and Eden had worked towards during their apprenticeship with Thatcher. Aside from the usual warnings that the party was ‘in danger of isolating itself’ from the working class, the statement introduced a number of policy prescriptions that were populist rather than ‘Labourist’ in provenance, but more clearly disposed towards liberty rather than equality. ‘Freedom’ was stressed as an imperative, which was juxtaposed with a defence of the rule of law and a tougher attitude towards crime. ‘The desire for law and order is not reactionary’, the statement explained, as discipline is necessary for the ‘social or individual development’ of the working class. The unions must also remain ‘free’, but only if

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<sup>675</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 4 June 1979.

<sup>676</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – ‘A Report on Two Years of Activity’, June 1977.

the balance of power was in favour of the workers and not the bosses; this meant the introduction of secret elections for all union officials and rules to abolish the closed shop. And their general vision of the future demonstrated how far the SDA now were from revisionist orthodoxy, with a reduction in state spending (too much of which, it stated, ‘destroys the traditional pride, thrift, dignity and independence of working people’) and mass sales of council housing advocated as the key policies necessary for economic revival, in the hope of ‘return[ing] Britain to the kind of mixed economy prevalent in the 1950s’.<sup>677</sup>

The Statement of Aims was social-democracy as seen through a Thatcherite lens, and it underlined the reputation of the SDA as ‘extreme moderates’. Although the issues they highlighted frequently deviated from the previous thirty years of party orthodoxy, the actual proposals they devised were not especially transformative in nature; indeed, one could say they were rather conservative. They still presented an unattractive prospect to the vast majority of social-democrats: Thatcher’s agenda did not appeal to them, and the idea that embracing such a future would bring the party into contact with the Gaitskellite values of twenty years ago would have seemed counter-intuitive. Only a select few Labour right-wingers were willing to engage with aspects of the SDA’s message and strategy – most notably Austin Mitchell, who scathingly denounced the Labour leadership in a 1979 Fabian essay for ‘fighting shy of simple policies with broad appeal’, attacking their squeamish ‘Boy Scout instincts’ when faced with the ‘less cerebral’ and ‘openly populist’ Conservative platform, which ‘demonstrated a real skill in harmonising policy, presentation and electoral stance’.<sup>678</sup>

The contempt in which the SDA held the party’s parliamentary leaders had also by now intensified, with one ‘activity report’ lambasting right-wing MPs as ‘timid, often

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<sup>677</sup> SJL, Owen, D709/2/17/1/8 – SDA Statement of Aims, October 1979.

<sup>678</sup> Austin Mitchell, *Can Labour Win Again?* (London, 1979), pp. 20-3.

frightened' placemen whose sole ability was to deliver 'jobs, quango[s], and personal status and security'.<sup>679</sup> During the 'Wilson-Callaghan era', the report said, both the Government and the PLP had become renowned not just for their lack of courage but the shabbiness of their personal conduct, mentioning a string of recent episodes – such as the controversial honours list Harold Wilson had approved upon retiring from the premiership – that embarrassed the party in public and raised questions about its probity. It also repeated Haseler's earlier complaints about the lack of interest displayed by Callaghan's leadership in matters of political philosophy, denouncing ministers for having no vision or intellectual foundation – their skill in tactical manoeuvre, it seems, could not make up for 'political thinking beyond the most shallow variety'.<sup>680</sup> The party's hierarchy was also accused, inevitably, of élitism, with Douglas Eden later quoted in the alternative press describing Labour as a vehicle for 'a middle-class self-appointed vanguard of the working class telling people what's good for them.'<sup>681</sup>

The relationships the SDA had with other right-wing activist groups were scarcely any better. As Richard Ryder acknowledged, the links between it and the Manifesto Group in the PLP were 'few and far between', not least because many of the 'old Gaitskillites [sic]' in the latter did not view Haseler and Eden as 'politically realistic'.<sup>682</sup> Moreover, the vituperation of the SDA towards the party's establishment was always likely to go down badly with the Group, which often refused to upset the apple cart even when critiquing the Government's record. As one of the latter's published statements, intended as a 'radical reassessment' of 'our problems as a party', put it: 'Labour in office has broadly carried out the policies its election manifestos have contained... the most striking conclusion is not a sense of disappointment, but a feeling of pride that under successive Labour Governments so

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<sup>679</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – 'Two Years of Activity'.

<sup>680</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – 'Two Years of Activity'.

<sup>681</sup> *Time Out*, 10-16 April 1981.

<sup>682</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/1/1/23 – Note: Richard Ryder to Margaret Thatcher, 28 February 1977.

much of what was set out has been achieved'.<sup>683</sup> This was, to put it mildly, not a 'reassessment' that disaffected warriors like Haseler were ever likely to accept. As for the Group's sister organisation, the CLV, the SDA initially welcomed its arrival as a 'most welcome development' – noting that it was pleasing to see such a 'leading figure' as Bill Rodgers masterminding its efforts – and advised delegates at the 1977 party conference to back their candidates for the NEC.<sup>684</sup> But the rationale of the CLV – at least in its early years – was that of the loyal rank-and-file organiser and supporter (see chapter four), with little desire to contribute to the evolution of party philosophy, while Rodgers's inclination to reach out to what he called the 'legitimate left' – mainly former Bevanites, such as Michael Foot – was also contrary to the SDA's entire *raison d'être*.<sup>685</sup>

With little affinity either in terms of strategy or intellectual development, many were also wary of the SDA for the simple reason that the organisation's actions seemed more likely to wreck the Labour Party than to 'save' it. Coarse counter-revolutionary propaganda was still their most distinctive feature, and they continued producing an avalanche of material exposing yet more rot in Labour's internal apparatus. In February 1977, for instance, they published 'Forty Frightening Facts about Our Trade Union Leaders', which itemised forensically the misdeeds of the 'barons' and other leading representatives, while the same condemnatory approach characterised 'Labour's Fifth Column', a later *smorgasbord* of 'facts and names' that purported to be the 'raw truth'.<sup>686</sup> Making little attempt to tone down their criticism, they insisted in yet another bulletin from September 1977 that the party's NEC, controlled by the left, 'had more in common with the Communist Party and other Leninist

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<sup>683</sup> Meredith, 'Rethinking Revisionist Social Democracy', pp. 210-2; BLPES, Sandelson, 4/8 – 'Manifesto Group statement', 17 September 1979.

<sup>684</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – 'Two Years of Activity'; 'Important Information for Delegates', 26 September 1977.

<sup>685</sup> Albert Sloman Library (SLO), University of Essex, Papers of William Rodgers (ROD), 1 – Speech to the CLV on 'Decline in Support for the Labour Party', 19 February 1977.

<sup>686</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – 'Forty Frightening Facts about Our Trade Union Leaders', February 1977; CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – 'Labour's Fifth Column', July 1977.

organisations than is consonant with the libertarian, democratic and anti-communist traditions of either Hugh Gaitskell or Aneurin Bevan'.<sup>687</sup> (In fact, their allegations were often deliberately shorn of context. When they approvingly quoted Harold Wilson's criticism in the *Times* of the 'different forms of what are now called neo-Trotskyites and Marcusism and Maoism' in the party, for instance, they neglected to include his assertion that Labour was still a 'very democratic party' with 'nothing like so much strain as we had in the 1940s and early '50s'.<sup>688</sup>)

Such overheated displays of rhetoric frightened other right-wingers, effectively forcing them to respond in much the same way as they had done during the group's unsuccessful launch in 1975 – by criticising the SDA as beyond the pale. After the publication of 'Forty Frightening Facts...', Ian Wrigglesworth of the Manifesto Group lambasted the document's authors for displaying the 'worst tactics of smear, innuendo and guilt by association', informing the *Guardian* that 'the SDA is an extreme Right-wing group of people, quite unrepresentative of the vast majority of people in the Labour Party, and is certainly neither moderate nor grass-roots.'<sup>689</sup> Alec McGivan of the CLV was more to the point, describing the SDA in 1979 as 'right-wing fanatics'.<sup>690</sup> Indeed, the group's penchant for broad-brush criticism left many Labour-leaning commentators only too glad to return the favour when given the chance. After Haseler's book *The Tragedy of Labour* was published in 1980, for example, Bernard Crick, writing in *The Guardian*, called him a 'militant individualist' who was playing the 'kind of provocative 'dare-to-throw-me-out' game as some Left-wingers used to practise', while in the *London Review of Books* Barbara Wootton equated his populism with that expressed by Tony Benn.<sup>691</sup>

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<sup>687</sup> CAC, THCR, 2/6/1/134 – 'Important Information for Delegates'.

<sup>688</sup> *Times*, 2 August 1976.

<sup>689</sup> *Guardian*, 5 February 1977.

<sup>690</sup> LHASC, MANIF, 1/1 – 'Labour Party and CLV'.

<sup>691</sup> *Guardian*, 18 September 1980; Barbara Wootton, 'The Future of the Labour Party', *London Review of Books*, 18 December 1980.

By 1979 moves were finally afoot to have the organisation removed from the party. The catalyst was a letter sent to Callaghan shortly before the general election, signed by Haseler, Eden and the group's chairman, Roger Fox, demanding that if Labour won he should pledge not to appoint to office any MP who had associated 'with totalitarian organisations' and failed to repudiate them.<sup>692</sup> An accompanying document entitled 'The Mutation of Labour' contained the names of 43 such guilty men and women, some of whom were of the 'soft' left, including Michael Foot.<sup>693</sup> In a letter published by the *Guardian* on 31 October, Eden claimed that by making this stand SDA officers in 'Left-controlled' CLPs were facing the prospect of expulsion.<sup>694</sup> He had earlier informed the erratic Jenkinsite MP Neville Sandelson that Haseler and Fox had already been ejected by Kensington CLP; their ordeal, he said, was 'more a purge trial than a kangaroo court', with neither man being informed of the accusations held against them.<sup>695</sup> Haseler went on the offensive, conflating the threat to his group with that faced by Sandelson and Roy Mason, both of whom were in dogfights with their CLPs, suggesting that all moderates would be endangered if their expulsions went ahead.<sup>696</sup>

The SDA's posture in this period was therefore one of wounded innocence – how, they asked, could moderates of impeccable credentials ('long-standing members of the Labour Party') be subject to such hounding while Marxist subversives rampaged with abandon? But as the new decade commenced, many of their actions continued to smack of deliberate provocation. The most notable instance of this was Haseler's promise to oppose 'extremists' who stood as Labour candidates, in order to give a 'positive lead and rallying

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<sup>692</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 4/8 – Letter: Douglas Eden, Stephen Haseler and Roger Fox to James Callaghan, undated [1979].

<sup>693</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 4/8 – 'The Mutation of Labour', April 1979.

<sup>694</sup> *Guardian*, 31 October 1979.

<sup>695</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 4/8 – Letter: Douglas Eden to Neville Sandelson, 30 October 1979.

<sup>696</sup> *Times*, 28 November 1979.

point' to those 'who are strongly opposed to the left-wing takeover of the Labour Party'.<sup>697</sup> This followed on from Eden's comment that, if 'leadership from Westminster' was not forthcoming, it would become 'less a battle to save the "Labour Party" and more one to secure proper representation for the views and values of Labour voters'.<sup>698</sup> These were not idle threats: at the 1979 European parliamentary elections Haseler had implored social-democrats not to vote for the party's candidate in Liverpool, and in July the following year sixteen SDA candidates were unveiled alongside a warning that events would lead inexorably to the creation of a new centre party.<sup>699</sup>

The *denouement* came at around this time. Haseler and Fox had briefly been reinstated in their CLPs, with Eden expected to follow, but in June 1980 the NEC reopened the question of whether membership of right- or left-wing 'extremist' organisations was compatible with party values. Their main defender on this occasion, perhaps ironically, was Tony Benn, who maintained that a decision to hound out the SDA's officers would give licence for CLPs of any ideological complexion to try and oust their opponents.<sup>700</sup> In September they were given a further ultimatum, when the organisation committee told the NEC that all persons named by the SDA as challengers to official Labour candidates 'would have one month to consider their position before being removed by the party'.<sup>701</sup> On 17 December 1980 the NEC came out in favour of expulsion by a majority of twenty-three to two.<sup>702</sup> As with so much else, the right was divided: whereas Shirley Williams and Tom Bradley were the NEC members who voted against, fellow right-winger (and firm party

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<sup>697</sup> *Times*, 31 January 1980.

<sup>698</sup> *Guardian*, 31 October 1979.

<sup>699</sup> *Guardian*, 30 May 1979; SJL, Owen, D709/2/17/1/8 – SDA Press Release and candidates list, 24 July 1980.

<sup>700</sup> *Guardian*, 26 June 1980.

<sup>701</sup> *Times*, 9 September 1980.

<sup>702</sup> *Guardian*, 18 December 1980.

loyalist) John Golding supported the decision to expel them, telling the press that ‘We are stronger now not to have the SDA within our ranks’.<sup>703</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Haseler and Eden were now without a political home. Their conception of social-democratic politics had changed greatly over the years, evolving from an initially ‘Labourist’ approach to one which aided the Conservative Party in developing a ‘populist’ appeal to the country. They had, of course, always been uncomfortable among the ranks of the Labour right: too aggressively proletarian to be at one with the ‘classless’, liberal instincts of most revisionists, their interest in new political ideas and desire to respond to changing political circumstances, together with a clear disregard for party loyalty and the unions, left them adrift from those ‘traditionalists’ who would otherwise have responded most keenly to their earlier Labourist ethos. This was exemplified during the disastrous first days of the SDA, when several loyalist right-wingers broke free from their new affiliation once it became clear to them that they would be required to undermine the Labour Party. The opprobrium Haseler and Eden received on that occasion did not deter them from continuing to plot behind the scenes, and both men were close at hand when Reg Prentice – once a loyal revisionist – chose to depart for the Conservative benches in 1977. It was only a relatively short step to advising the leader of the Opposition herself, taking advantage of the antipathy of the Conservative party’s radical wing towards the established order in order to advance their own blueprint for political transformation.

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<sup>703</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 18 December 1980.

The shift from Labourism to Thatcherite populism had been assisted by subtle changes in Haseler's ethical standpoint. At the beginning of the 1970s, he displayed a staunch belief in the virtues of egalitarianism from a traditional (or, as he would put it, Labourist) point of view, which identified the need to fight on behalf of the working class against the 'establishment'. Haseler understood, however, that old-style Labourism had little appeal outside the traditional working-class constituency, leading him to combine it with populism in order to appeal to newly marginalised groups. Such a position was analogous to the attitudes displayed by Anthony Crosland, but by the middle of the decade – when he was much more alarmed by the far-left – Haseler had outgrown his mentor and come to appreciate the virtues of a more explicitly liberal approach to revisionism. Yet, he still differed from those Jenkinsites who similarly argued for greater liberty in place of 'total' equality, as his arguments remained populist rather than utilitarian in nature; the redressing of the balance away from equality was therefore justified mainly on the grounds that the working class wanted it and would benefit from it. This differentiation relied in part on Haseler's consistent rejection of rationalism, which led him to argue against technocratic expertise on the basis that it undervalued popular opinion.

The other abiding feature of the populists, at least when under Haseler's influence, was their willingness to adapt to a variety of different means in order to arrive at certain ends. Again, populism itself was the key factor here: by remaining steadfast in their identification with 'ordinary people' – as well as haranguing their foes among the middle-class élite – they could lay claim to an underlying sense of continuity that transcended the changing shifts of both party and circumstance. Thus, having already advanced their principles by collaborating with Labour's historic political enemy, Haseler and Eden lost no time in seeking opportunistically to collaborate with those who shared their desire to force a shift in the British political system, and even prior to their expulsion they were involved in clandestine

talks with various organisations and individuals about a potential breakaway from the party.

This, as we shall discover in the next chapter, was necessary for the next stage of their

project: to extinguish Labour completely by replacing it with a new social-democratic party.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The SDP and its inheritance from the Labour Party

#### Introduction

The foundation of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in March 1981 is normally viewed as the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Labour revisionism; the moment when the light gradually went out on the philosophy that had, for better or worse, inspired every Labour frontbench since the Second World War. All of its parliamentary founders – with one exception<sup>704</sup> – had belonged to Labour, standing firmly on the right, and were excited by the prospect of leading their new party to future glory. They had been pushed out for a number of reasons, many of which have been explored in previous chapters: by the hostility to EEC membership still expressed in many corners of the party; by the accusations of ‘élitism’ that had continued to be directed their way; by the increasing dominance of the left and the trade unions on the NEC, in the PLP and among the CLPs; and by the ineffectiveness of the party’s leaders in dealing with those problems. In addition, there were those – of whom David Marquand and Stephen Haseler were two very contrasting examples – who expressed dissatisfaction with their fellow right-wingers, and who had long since decided that if social-democracy was to evolve beyond revisionism into a radical philosophy then it needed to jettison its Labour party baggage.

The defectors’ perceptions about what the replacement should aspire to be, however, were by no means uniform. Those who had a genuine desire to see a new ‘centre’ were

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<sup>704</sup> The Conservative MP Christopher Brocklebank-Fowler, who defected in March 1981.

animated by visions of breaking the existing system – both the two-party axis that preserved it and the class-conscious, tribal attitude to politics it had fostered. However, there was no consensus behind this, for many of those that joined them had not followed the same patterns of thinking even when they were still members of the Labour Party. Their desire was to see the SDP usurp Labour's prospects, by extracting all that they had believed in when they were still involved with the party right and using it to entice the working-class Labour vote into their new stable. This was known as the 'Mark II Labour Party' conception, and it attracted a great deal of support when the project was still in its embryonic phase, not just from the new party's leaders but from among its membership. But no matter how appealing such an idea it was, the downside of such a strategy was that it implicitly relied on reviving the past. This was a problem for those committed to rupturing the system, for they believed that the SDP needed to represent a form of centrist or centre-left politics that had never been presented by the electorate before. As David Owen was to write in 1982, 'there was a definable philosophy of social democracy that was unrepresented by any party in British politics and that would provide the electoral basis for a totally new party.'<sup>705</sup>

This chapter shall seek to reveal how this process of translation from Labour revisionism to new 'centre' party played out. In the first section there shall be an extended examination of the different ambitions several key players had for the new party, some of which were far more attached to Labourist practices and heritage than others. It shall then analyse the fragmented way in which the party was born, being the product of no one individual or group but a collective effort from a wide array of political actors, who all came to the project with very different expectations about what could be achieved. After that, the chapter continues with two sections that examine the pressures placed on residual Labourist

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<sup>705</sup> David Owen, 'The Enabling Society', in Wayland Kennet (ed.) *The Rebirth of Britain* (London, 1982), pp. 241-2.

instincts by the desire of many Social Democrats to represent themselves as something new: the first looks more closely at how the ‘Mark II Labour Party’ conceit slowly died, despite its apparent popularity as a model among certain sections of the grassroots, while the second analyses the SDP’s policies on the trade unions, perhaps the one element of wider political culture that most challenged the new party’s relationship with its Labour Party past and the future it wished to create.

### **The ‘Centre’ Party: conflicting perspectives.**

Before the SDP was even created, there was enough discontent for several Labour Party figures to openly consider what the nature of a new ‘centre’ party might be. The man who, more than anyone else, provided the impetus for such speculation was Roy Jenkins. As chapter four has discussed, while in parliament Jenkins remained largely unconcerned about questions involving the nature of social-democracy (although he realised by the early 1970s that he could no longer consider himself a ‘socialist’, and was fastidious enough to refrain from using the term). But what did leave him increasingly anxious was the impact of the nation’s ‘decline’ on its political fabric. An early sign of this came in 1976, when he gave a speech in Anglesey which railed against increased taxes on the wealthy and warned that high levels of public expenditure would harm the ‘values of a plural society with adequate freedom of choice.’<sup>706</sup> Despite leaving Westminster to begin his term as president of the European Commission the following year, he continued to express a ‘degree of fascination with British domestic politics’, occasionally intervening in debate – most notably in an

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<sup>706</sup> Campbell, *A Well-Rounded Life*, p. 454.

*Encounter* article from February 1978, when he wrote tentatively of a ‘mood of questioning and self-doubt’ which he claimed was now engulfing the political system.<sup>707</sup>

Only after the Conservatives’ election victory in 1979, however, did he receive an opportunity to set out his thoughts to the general public, when the BBC invited him to give the annual Richard Dimbleby memorial lecture in November. Introduced as some ‘home thoughts from abroad’, the broad sweep and historical sensibility that characterised Jenkins’ lecture gave a clear intimation as to his priorities. ‘What I want to talk about’, he began, ‘is the state of British politics today, not primarily the parties or individual politicians, but the system itself, and whether and how it ought to be changed and improved.’ It was the obstacles to progress caused by the ‘constricting rigidity... almost the tyranny’ of the bipartisan political structure that vexed him, and his response was conditioned not by any argument for reconceptualising social-democracy or even for a shift in the balance of forces within the left, but by the need to engineer nothing less than the complete rupture of the extant framework.<sup>708</sup>

Jenkins’ attitudes towards reform coalesced around the notion that Britain’s relative decline over the previous twenty years was now an incontestable feature of national life, and required a permanent change of habits for it to be properly tackled. He identified ‘two main aspects’ that would secure the ‘desperately needed recovery of the British economy and of British national self-confidence.’<sup>709</sup> First, there was ‘the content of politics’, which he characterised as adversarial and short-term in nature, driven by ‘excessive political partisanship’. Jenkins argued that the main culprit was the continual pendulum swing between Labour and Conservative in and out of government, which had produced a surfeit of

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<sup>707</sup> N. Piers Ludlow, *Roy Jenkins and the European Commission Presidency, 1976-1980: At the Heart of Europe* (Basingstoke, 2016), p. 224; Roy Jenkins, ‘What’s Wrong, & What Could Be Set Right’, *Encounter*, February 1978.

<sup>708</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 5/5 – Roy Jenkins, ‘Home Thoughts from Abroad: The Richard Dimbleby Lecture’, 22 November 1979, p. 3.

<sup>709</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 5/5 – Jenkins, ‘Home Thoughts’, p. 9.

unnecessary and hasty legislation when either of the parties was in power, ‘in the almost certain knowledge that they will be reversed by the other’. Their support for ‘class selfishness and revolution’ had, among other things, fostered ‘precisely the sort of mood [that] is rapidly turning Britain into a manufacturing desert.’<sup>710</sup> The second ‘aspect’ concerned the ‘institutional form’ of politics, which was Jenkins’ somewhat decorous term for the electoral system. The case for replacing first-past-the-post (FPTP) with proportional representation, he contended, had become ‘overwhelming’; not only was the latter evidently fairer, but the experience of recent administration suggested it was no less likely to lead to ‘effective, coherent government’ than the *status quo*.

But these arguments were discussed in a cursory fashion, for his main purpose was to attack the historic advantages enjoyed by the political duopoly, whose crumbling supremacy in the 1970s was nevertheless shielded from any serious challenge by the ‘winner-takes-all’ principle of FPTP. ‘The great disadvantage of our present electoral system’, Jenkins asserted, ‘is that it freezes the pattern of politics, and holds together the incompatible because everybody assumes that if a party splits it will be electorally slaughtered’. In a phrase that echoed Reg Prentice, he alleged that such conditions made the ‘moderates too much the prisoners of the extremists’. Clearly, an interplay of nostalgic and innovative impulses was at work. Jenkins spoke of the 1940s and 1950s as one of co-operation and harmony, in which the country managed to deal ‘reasonably successfully with the post-war world’. His assumption was that, while popular sentiment had not fundamentally changed, the political duopoly was no longer able to guide or even reflect it, rendering it necessary to embrace a rupture as a means of renewing the sense of ‘cohesion’ experienced in times past.<sup>711</sup>

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<sup>710</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 5/5 – Jenkins, ‘Home Thoughts’, pp. 9-10.

<sup>711</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 5/5 – Jenkins, ‘Home Thoughts’, pp. 6, 12.

Jenkins ended his peroration by detailing the list of things he wanted from a flexible, moderate government: an encouragement of entrepreneurs, to promote enterprise; appropriate taxation and redistribution to ‘spread the benefits throughout society’; and a system in which the state ‘knows its place’, granting liberties to the ordinary citizen and restricting ‘unnecessary centralisation and bureaucracy’.<sup>712</sup> But beyond criticising its democratic centralism and unrepresentative, trade union-dominated party machine, he left little clue as what he wanted from Labour. The *Guardian*, in an editorial on 24 November, recognised that Jenkins had ruled out embarking on a ‘long war of attrition’ from within the Labour Party, and such was the newspaper’s certainty that he was preparing to form a new party that there was even some rumination over what it would be called, concluding that it ‘would presumably drop the name Labour... more likely it would style itself Social Democrat’. ‘Mr Jenkins’, it went on to say, is ‘now apparently convinced that there is no longer any hope for [his] old party’.<sup>713</sup> The *Economist*, however, was more cautious, noting only that the lecture did not specifically repudiate the Labour Party, and that it was still ‘theoretically possible’ for Jenkins to serve in a future Labour Government.<sup>714</sup> But what few observed is that the libertarian ethos expressed towards the end of Jenkins’ speech was not just a rejection of what the Labour right had become, but was in keeping with the priorities of the Liberal Party, one of the principal victims of the two-party system.

The Dimpleby Lecture came to be seen as the main declaration of intent behind much of what followed over the next two years. Nonetheless, the absence of any particular course of action in the lecture meant that until he returned from Brussels there were no further clues given in public as to his intentions. To understand how the ‘Jenkinsite’ perspective would develop beyond what its eponymous leader himself said, one must turn to the writings of one

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<sup>712</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 5/5 – Jenkins, ‘Home Thoughts’, p. 16.

<sup>713</sup> *Guardian*, 24 November 1979.

<sup>714</sup> *Economist*, 24 November 1979.

of his closest confidantes, David Marquand. Chapter Four has already discussed how Marquand chided the Labour Party for its apparent hostility both to ideas and the liberal bourgeoisie that produced them. By the time the Dimpleby Lecture was delivered he had moved on from these initial analyses towards the goal of achieving a ‘fundamental change in the whole political culture.’<sup>715</sup> Although his political instincts could be typified as of the ‘centre’, in that he eschewed the poles of both Left and Right, Marquand was adamant that any new formation must not be blandly ‘moderate’, and unlike Jenkins his specific intention was to transform social-democracy into a genuinely ‘radical’ force that would rupture the *status quo*.

So, on the matter of the electoral system, for example, Marquand not only assailed the ‘binary politics’ of the past, but attached to it a much greater significance, arguing that it was a symptom of what he called ‘club government’. This he portrayed as an insular nexus of power based on an adversarial parliamentary model of sovereignty, administered by people who believed that ‘in this country there is no need for power to be shared or for the sharing of it to be determined by known principles’ – a much more sceptical reading of the recent past than that of Jenkins, given the latter’s nostalgia for the ‘common ground’ of the 1950s and support for parliamentary sovereignty.<sup>716</sup> Marquand also followed on from the work of the Manifesto Group by recommending that the frontiers of both the centralist state, especially the ‘big’ trade unions, and the hegemonic ‘corporatist’ economic paradigm should be curtailed in favour of the stratum of entrepreneurs and small businessmen which formed the backbone of the ‘micro-economy’. Not only was this sector more ‘efficient and innovative’ than the corporate Leviathans and union barons, he explained, but it also acted as a natural partner for ‘libertarian’ social-democracy: it was ‘diverse and adaptable’, amenable to the

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<sup>715</sup> David Marquand, *The Case for Coalition* (London, 1981), p. 7.

<sup>716</sup> David Marquand, ‘The Politics of Nostalgia’, inaugural lecture at the University of Salford, 25 October 1979, p. 15.

self-employed, ‘local initiatives’ and workers’ co-operatives, and had the potential to empower individual consumers by allowing them more control of resources.<sup>717</sup>

Marquand’s preference for liberty over equality had one further consequence in terms of strategy: it created space for the Liberal Party to participate as allies. His goal was to reach out to them by rehabilitating the idea of coalitions – both of principles and of governments. Invited as a guest to the Liberals’ annual party conference in 1980, he announced that revisionists like himself ‘had more in common with Liberals than with either the neo-marxists of the left or the Thatcherite wing of the Tory Party’ adding that the relationship could become even more profound if his side had the nerve to ‘give more emphasis to individual action and to develop a decentralised, libertarian version of social democracy’.<sup>718</sup> In a journal article he praised the party’s leader, David Steel, for his commitment to the ‘Lib-Lab’ pact of 1977–78 as part of a wider plan to realign the left, and deduced that the preponderance of ‘radical’ liberals among the membership – as opposed to ‘Whiggish’ ones – would ensure there were ‘no objections’ should a realignment come to pass. Any demands that Marquand should join the Liberals were, however, something he swatted aside: ‘it is a little odd to proclaim fierce opposition to the monolithic two-party system’, he noted, ‘only to insist on maintaining a monolithic three-party one.’<sup>719</sup>

But if Marquand’s aspirations for renewal created opportunities for the Liberal Party, he unsurprisingly held a much more ambivalent attitude towards the party he had left behind. Although he invited the ‘Radical Right’ of the Labour Party to join him in breaking free, he had already stated in his ‘inquest’ of 1979 that he did not believe ‘the job of revising traditional welfare-state social democracy can be done within the formal framework of the

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<sup>717</sup> *Guardian*, 25 February 1980.

<sup>718</sup> David Marquand and Michael Meadowcroft, *Liberalism and Social Democracy* (London, 1981), pp. 3, 6.

<sup>719</sup> David Marquand, ‘The Libs and the Centre’, *Listener*, 26 June 1980.

Labour Party or that active Labour politicians can contribute much to it'.<sup>720</sup> The SDP was borne out of a 'crisis of revisionism', and the last thing he wanted was for it to turn into a 'bigger and better version of the Manifesto Group'.<sup>721</sup> In fact, his rejection of much of Labour's recent history led him to redefine social-democracy as a 'tradition' that was neither exclusive to the party nor solely the result of its internal doctrinal evolution – with the clear inference that present-day social-democracy could be enriched and radicalised by alternative forces from the non-Labour Centre-Left.<sup>722</sup> In electoral terms, this involved appealing to the 'popular constituency of displaced persons', whose numbers would still be growing 'even if Denis Healey had won the leadership election'. Such 'homeless' voters were 'anti-Conservative, but non-Labour', yet unimpressed by the Liberals, and could only be tempted by an explicitly social-democratic party if it divested itself of a sentimental attachment to 'traditional', class-bound identities. Only by appealing 'to the future, not the past' could it make progress, he claimed, and it was this understanding 'that differentiates us from our fellow revisionists who have remained in the Labour Party.'<sup>723</sup>

This was an over-confident assertion: not everyone who was disillusioned with Labour wanted to establish a *tabula rasa*. Stephen Haseler, for example, continued to hold faith in the Labour right as it had been at its zenith, as was shown when discussions on the new 'Centre Party' were still at an embryonic stage. In a 1980 *Encounter* article, he advised that the optimum outcome would be for any new party to 'seize the "left-of-centre" ground' by 'bit[ing] deep into Labour's traditional working-class vote and... recreat[ing], in suitable modern and relevant form, the Labour Party of the late 1940s and '50s', and warned his

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<sup>720</sup> Marquand and Meadowcroft, *Liberalism and Social Democracy*, p. 3; Marquand, 'Inquest on a Movement'.

<sup>721</sup> David Marquand, 'What the Social Democrats Should Try to Achieve', *London Review of Books*, 7 May 1981.

<sup>722</sup> David Marquand, *Russet-Coated Captains: The Challenge of Social Democracy*, Open Forum Papers, 5 (London, 1982), p. 11.

<sup>723</sup> Marquand, 'What the Social Democrats Should Try to Achieve'.

fellow social-democrats that their project must ‘be free of the taint of “elitism”’ if they wished to avoid the fate of ‘becoming lionised in Belgravia and Hampstead while leaving folk cold and aloof in Worksop and Basildon.’<sup>724</sup> The problem, he considered, was as much cultural as political: ‘Modern middle-class social democrats’, he opined in *The Tragedy of Labour*, ‘simply cannot speak the language of Labour working people. In fact they hardly know them.’<sup>725</sup> Relying on the populist spirit that he had cultivated throughout the previous decade, Haseler (unlike Marquand) was averse to including the Liberals in any future arrangement, as he regarded that party’s leadership as too taken by ‘random and flippant notions’ to ‘strike an authentic chord as a party of ordinary people.’<sup>726</sup>

Although Haseler and Marquand’s notions of party ethos were based on irreconcilable points of view, the fluidity of the situation nevertheless created opportunities to find common ground. For a start, Haseler made sure to counterbalance his own inclinations by adopting a more ‘consensual’ tone. Hence several emollient passages in his *Encounter* article, where he agreed with Marquand’s complaints about the dangers of ‘proletarianism’, praised the ‘democratic and populist’ traditions typified by Liberals such as Lloyd-George and voiced his admiration for the ‘classless’ forms of society found in West Germany and the US.<sup>727</sup> Most importantly, he echoed Marquand by arguing that the ‘centre’ of British politics was not synonymous with middle-of-the-road hesitancy, but the incubus for something genuinely transformative that would challenge the binary party system. In a letter to the *Guardian* in February 1981 he sought to clarify this ideological positioning:

I would imagine that a new radical party will be seen as more ‘left-wing’ and progressive than Labour on questions of democratising society – as opposed to

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<sup>724</sup> Stephen Haseler, ‘Towards a Centre Party’, *Encounter*, April 1980.

<sup>725</sup> Haseler, *Tragedy of Labour*, p. 192.

<sup>726</sup> Haseler, ‘Towards a Centre Party’.

<sup>727</sup> Haseler, ‘Towards a Centre Party’.

Labour's sterile statism and corporatism – and more 'right-wing' than the rather feeble Conservative Government in dealing with the excesses of trade union power.<sup>728</sup>

Even so, Haseler was not alone among the original schismatics in wanting to salvage something from Labour's revisionist heritage. Another was Evan Luard, who attempted to make contact 'with those at the centre of things' by penning a memorandum shortly before the SDP was formed, in which he stated that it was now both 'inevitable and essential' that a new 'centre left-party' (and 'not a centre party') should come into being. Luard emphasised in this document that the party's primary aim should be to 'win the support of most of the traditional Labour voters', and that he did not favour christening the new enterprise the 'Social Democratic Party' as it had a 'continental and a middle-class ring' to it (instead preferring 'Democratic Labour Party' for its emphasis on 'the party's roots in the old Labour Party'). Luard also rejected the idea that Jenkins should assume the leadership as he 'lacks the human touch that is essential', and hoped that 'acknowledged Labour leaders' such as Roy Mason and Merlyn Rees would join the new party's leadership in order to prevent it from having 'an almost entirely middle-class flavour'.<sup>729</sup> Luard thus still obviously retained some kind of an attachment to the *status quo ante*, but given that he had written only a year before that many 'traditional policies of the Labour Party... belong in some way to the past and are irrelevant to current needs', these instincts were perhaps surprising – certainly, his earlier comments had been enough to lead Marquand into mistakenly enthusing that Luard 'exemplified a widespread mood... with which the old Right of the Labour Party had no more in common than the Left'.<sup>730</sup>

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<sup>728</sup> *Guardian*, 25 February 1981.

<sup>729</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 5/3 – 'A New Centre-Left Party', undated [1980/1].

<sup>730</sup> David Marquand, 'The London Review of Books Started with an Interest in the Social Democrats, in the Days before the Party was Launched', *London Review of Books*, 1 October 1981.

Another party intellectual who shared Luard's sentiments was Michael Young, a senior figure in the Labour movement best known for authoring the party's manifesto at the 1945 General Election. Young was an idiosyncratic thinker, who by the 1980s was largely focused on campaigning on behalf of consumers' rights. Yet he was still involved in the party's affairs, and as early as 1960 had written a short booklet, *The Chipped White Cups of Dover*, in which he maintained that Labour was 'no longer the undisputed party of reform', had become not just a 'nationalistic party' but 'a Little Englander party', and was as 'conservative as its opponents' in its regard for conventional morality. Worse, it had become too attached to the 'producer interest', and did not understand that people's interests were switching from 'production to consumption' – something which he predicted would lead to the fragmentation of the class identities and loyalties that had buoyed the party for so long. Young predicted that a new institution 'claiming to be the party of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century' would be a 'great danger' to one 'which was new in 1900'. He even published polling data from the period showing that 25 per cent of voters would be prepared to vote for a 'Consumers' Party' if it stood for election.<sup>731</sup>

Having portended the arrival of the SDP by some twenty years, it was entirely appropriate that Young should join it when it came into being. Ideologically there were obvious affinities between himself and the leading players. For example, he shared the desire of Marquand and Luard to introduce libertarian ethics into left-wing political debate, arguing that 'Decentralisation is needed, with power moved away from the central to the local and from the big to the small... [and] with the proper provision for redistribution of resources from richer to poorer districts.'<sup>732</sup> One of his primary goals was to work for the 'diminution of power of the welfare state' by implementing a negative income tax for low-earners, and he

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<sup>731</sup> CAC, Michael Young (YUNG) papers, 2/2/2 – 'The Chipped White Cups of Dover' (1960)

<sup>732</sup> Michael Young, *Bigness is the Enemy of Humanity*, Open Forum Papers, 1 (London, 1981), p. 20.

called for further action to empower local authorities, co-operatives, tenants' associations and school governors at the expense of existing structures.<sup>733</sup> But Young's politics were as eclectic as his career. In 1980 he described himself as a 'socialist' of the 'utopian' kind in the tradition of Robert Owen and William Morris, which was certainly alien to the statist, centralising tendencies of the Labour left but also at a distance from the political culture of most revisionists and post-revisionists.<sup>734</sup> Despite his enthusiasm for progress, he maintained an attachment to the heritage of the Labour movement, and he seemed to have no urge to see his old party destroyed: as he confessed in 1984, 'my own main hope in joining the SDP was that it would lead to a stirring up of ideas... amongst socialists both in and out of the Labour Party.'<sup>735</sup> Like Haseler and Luard, this placed him at odds with many specific characteristics of the SDP once the split they wished for had become a reality.

### **The birth of the new party**

The route between the Dimpleby Lecture and the birth of the SDP bore witness to a number of debates among its leading protagonists over how best to disentangle themselves from their former allegiance. They met on numerous occasions throughout 1980, and although Jenkins was still a "prince over the water" he undertook several trips back from Brussels to help facilitate dialogue. It soon became obvious, however, that there were some fundamental disagreements over matters of timing and how best to implement organisational structures. What's more, many of the key players did not agree to get involved in the breakaway until relatively late in the day, often bringing with them different perspectives and motivations for

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<sup>733</sup> CAC, YUNG, 3/1/2 – Michael Young, 'Smallness is not Always Beautiful', 22 August 1980.

<sup>734</sup> CAC, YUNG, 3/1/2 – Young, 'Smallness is not Always Beautiful'.

<sup>735</sup> CAC, YUNG, 3/1/2 – Michael Young, 'Democratic Socialism: What's Left', 8 January 1984.

coming on board. The asymmetrical actions of these renegades, and the fragmented way in which they co-ordinated with each other, was further aggravated by their divergent expectations of what the party's ideological complexion should be and what groups of voters it should try to attract once it came into being.

Ian Bradley, writing soon after the SDP was formed, judged there to have been three separate groups involved in forming the new party.<sup>736</sup> The first revolved around Jenkins himself, and involved a cabal of close associates from his days as a minister. Several of the latter were disillusioned former MPs: as well as Marquand, they included Michael Barnes, Dick Taverne and Colin Phipps. Taverne, who had lost his Lincoln seat back in 1974 (see chapter two), had argued since his expulsion from Labour that a new national social-democratic party was feasible, and at a meeting of his supporters in 1977 – now arranged as the Lincoln Democratic Labour Association, with a sizeable presence on the city council – he and Reg Prentice made a joint call for its establishment.<sup>737</sup> Other renegade plotters in Jenkins's orbit included Matthew Oakeshott, who had worked as his assistant at the Home Office, his former press adviser Lord (John) Harris, and the human rights lawyer Anthony Lester.

Bradley's second group was the SDA under Stephen Haseler and Douglas Eden. Having by now been stripped of their party memberships (with their cases under appeal), both men were eager to join in on any intrigue. But, as the *Times* journalist Ronald Butt noted, Haseler's 'populism' was 'a term of abuse on the Whiggish Labour right', making it difficult for any kind of collaboration to occur between themselves and the 'elitist social democrat' Jenkins.<sup>738</sup> The SDA was, however, willing to substitute their hard-line rhetoric for a more constructive approach when the occasion demanded it, and in January 1980 Haseler

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<sup>736</sup> Ian Bradley, *Breaking the Mould? The Birth and Prospects of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford, 1981), p. 68.

<sup>737</sup> BLPES, Prentice, 2/7 – Press Release, 21 February 1977; *Times*, 22 February 1977.

<sup>738</sup> *Times*, 24 January 1980.

wrote to Jenkins informing him that, although he had not always agreed ‘with some of your specific political views’ – such as ‘over-feverish Europeanism’ and the refusal to ‘bust-up the party’ for its ‘left-wing excesses’ – he believed that any centrist force would flounder without ‘your imprimatur and involvement’. Confessing that he had considered Labour as ‘hopeless for social democrats... for about five years’, he revealed his existing plan for the SDA to field candidates in seats held by Tribune Group MPs.<sup>739</sup> This illustrated an immediate difference in the *modus operandi* between the two groups: whereas the Jenkinsites prioritised their social connections and the efficacy of high politics, the SDA were attached to a ‘grassroots’ approach that harnessed the energy of disaffected radicals from outside parliament with prior experience in battling against their leftist enemies.

Because the conspirators had hitherto met in different combinations it took some time for the two groups to come together, at which point it became clear that there were severe differences of opinion over how to build the momentum needed for a breakaway. Haseler and Eden both wanted to hit the ground running and set up the new party quickly, a view that was shared by some of the more spirited Jenkinsites, such as Barnes, Phipps and Taverne. Together they formed a ‘Centre Party Preparatory Committee’, which presented a paper to Jenkins on 4 July 1980 calling for the formation of a ‘structural framework’ that would ‘build up local groups and effective back-up services’, in anticipation of the successful launch of a ‘non-bureaucratic and non-hierarchical’ centre party at the beginning of the next year. These ‘local groups’ included the SDA itself, Taverne’s Democratic Labour, and the Association of Democratic Groups, an organisation founded by Phipps in the West Midlands. Most contentiously, the paper recommended that the committee’s existence should be announced publicly, as only by making themselves known could they make ‘points of contact’ with

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<sup>739</sup> WES, Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 134 – Letter: Stephen Haseler to Roy Jenkins, 7 January 1980.

kindred spirits and stake out a ‘territorial claim to the ground [the party] wishes to occupy’ well in advance.<sup>740</sup>

Jenkins, who already had doubts about Phipps’s activities in the Black Country, was unimpressed by Haseler and Eden, describing them in his diary as ‘looking like hard-faced men who had done badly out of the Labour Party’. Exasperated, he tried to stop them from acting too rashly:

We should have a meeting in late October and see where we went from then. In the meantime, the SDA could do what they liked provided they did not implicate me, and those who are longing for action, like Mickey Barnes and Colin Phipps and maybe Dick [Taverne], could associate themselves with them to the extent that they liked.<sup>741</sup>

Haseler and Eden interpreted this as typical patrician fastidiousness, with the latter recalling in 2009 that Jenkins had let them ‘knew where we stood’ by declaring that ‘he would not meet them again’.<sup>742</sup> Two weeks later, the SDA carried out its threat to unveil its own ‘grassroots’ candidates to stand against Labour left-wingers at the next election, presenting 16 of them (all ex-Labour) to the press. In their accompanying statement they showed interest in appealing to the traditional party electorate, publishing analysis from a MORI poll which showed that ‘many more Labour voters than any other would be likely to transfer their support to a Centre Party’.<sup>743</sup>

The main reason why the core Jenkinsites were reluctant to move rapidly was because they were far more focused on securing the backing of other senior Labour parliamentarians, most notably the ‘Gang of Three’, the third group in Bradley’s schema. The ‘gang’ –

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<sup>740</sup> WES, Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 134 – ‘Centre Party Preparatory Committee’ paper, 4 July 1980.

<sup>741</sup> Jenkins, *European Diary*, pp. 587, 616-7.

<sup>742</sup> *Times*, 12 February 2009.

<sup>743</sup> SJL, Owen, D709/2/17/1/8 – SDA Press Release and candidates list, 24 July 1980.

composed of David Owen, Bill Rodgers and Shirley Williams – were all regarded as substantial figures, and were seen by Jenkins as necessary for any detachment to gain traction. He entertained hopes for the latter two especially, noting in a letter to the ex-MP Austen Albu that ‘Shirley and Bill [were] surprisingly favourable’ to his Dimbleby Lecture.<sup>744</sup> Rodgers was stirred enough to make his own intervention a week later, announcing at a CLP meeting in Abertillery that the party had only a year left to ‘save itself’; if it did not, he predicted, then the principles upon which it was founded ‘would not die’ as there would be ‘men and women prepared to carry on the fight.’<sup>745</sup> In January 1980 he informed Jenkins that any new centre party would have to act ‘as a party of the left’ and take over ‘90% of the existing Labour Party vote’, with the Liberals kept at ‘arm’s length’ and an electoral pact arranged only if they stood down in all Labour-held seats. This was a far cry from Jenkins’s vision, and Rodgers also wrote that in his letter that he still felt ‘it would be better to save the Labour Party than venture out into the unknown with a new Fourth Party’.<sup>746</sup>

Owen shared Rodgers’s somewhat ambivalent feelings, warning CLV activists at their congress in January 1980 that the party’s lack of public appeal could lead to the ‘emergence of a strong third party’, even while claiming to find that prospect ‘unattractive’ because it would lack ‘roots’ and an ‘underlying philosophical commitment’.<sup>747</sup> Indeed, his rhetoric throughout the period since Labour’s defeat was an uneasy mixture of radical revisionism and a continuing loyalty to the party’s past. He spoke, for instance, of how social-democrats needed a ‘radical counter philosophy’ to Thatcherism, not the ‘bureaucracy of the corporate state’ or the ‘policies of fudge and mudge’, but combined this in other speeches with a

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<sup>744</sup> CAC, ALBU, 9 – Letter: Roy Jenkins to Austen Albu, 1 December 1979.

<sup>745</sup> LHASC, Hayter – Press release from Bill Rodgers, 30 November 1979.

<sup>746</sup> WES, Jenkins, MS.Jenkins 134 – Letter: Bill Rodgers to Roy Jenkins, 3 January 1980.

<sup>747</sup> SJL, Owen, D709/2/9/4 – Campaign for Labour Victory meeting speech, 10 January 1980.

defence of the last Labour Government, of which he had been ‘proud to be a member’.<sup>748</sup> His main suggestion for ideological regeneration was to emulate Peter Jay (see chapter four) by arguing for a synthesis of the collectivist, egalitarian ethics of the historic co-operative movement with a ‘new philosophy of market socialism’, which would ‘allow for efficiency, democracy and participation’ and ‘contribute to the development of consumerism’.<sup>749</sup> Williams, too, as Geoffrey Foote notes, also looked to socialist traditions as a way of encouraging intellectual renewal, alighting on the example of R. H. Tawney as a ‘marvellously farsighted’ avatar of what a ‘pastoral, gentle and humane’ socialism could look like.<sup>750</sup>

The Gang of Three’s confusion and hesitancy stymied any attempt by Jenkins to woo them, and it was only after the right was forced onto the defensive that matters began to evolve. The *casus belli*, in Dianne Hayter’s words, was an agreement signed in June 1980 which accepted the principle of an electoral college for selecting the leader, widening the base beyond the parliamentary cohort to include CLPs and the unions.<sup>751</sup> At the annual conference in Blackpool three months later, mandatory reselection and unilateral disarmament were both endorsed as policies. Owen’s subsequent refusal to stand for the shadow cabinet signalled to onlookers that he might soon cross the Rubicon, and later that month he received correspondence from Taverne, Phipps and the SDA inviting him to ‘have a talk’.<sup>752</sup> Despite further prevarication, he now spoke in despairing terms about the possibility of ‘saving’ the right: ‘we will never again elect a leader of the calibre of Hugh

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<sup>748</sup> SJL, Owen, D709/2/9/3 – Speech at Merthyr Tydfil CLP, 9 November 1979; Speech at Wolverhampton Polytechnic, 23 November 1979; SJL, Owen, D709/2/9/4 – Address at May Day rally, Millbrook, 5 May 1980.

<sup>749</sup> SJL, Owen, D709/2/9/3 – Speech given to International Co-operative Alliance, Manchester, 1 October 1979. See also David Owen, *Face the Future* (Oxford, 1981), where he sets out his ideas in more detail.

<sup>750</sup> Foote, *Labour Party’s Political Thought*, p. 252; Shirley Williams, *Politics is for People* (London, 1981), pp. 23-4.

<sup>751</sup> Hayter, *Fightback!*, pp. 90-1.

<sup>752</sup> SJL, Owen, D709/2/17/1/8 – Letters to David Owen from Dick Taverne, Colin Phipps and Stephen Haseler, 19, 23 and 27 November 1980.

Gaitskell’, he gloomily confided to Taverne, ‘and I think we can say goodbye to any idea of a Bad Godesberg conference in the 1980s’.<sup>753</sup> By January 1981, he and the other two members of the Gang of Three had thrown their lot in with Jenkins, and at the end of that month they formed the Council for Social Democracy (CSD) to ‘rally all those who are committed to the values, principles and policies of social democracy’.<sup>754</sup> Thus, the new party was born.

Given its diverse roots, it was no surprise that the ingredients for a new post-revisionist social-democracy were an eclectic mixture – the ‘radical centrism’ of Jenkins and Marquand, the aggressive populism of Haseler and Eden, and the only recently extinguished Labour loyalties of Owen, Williams and Rodgers. But how did the ‘continuing’ revisionists in the Labour Party respond to this challenge? Having watched as the constitutional framework of the party succumbed to the activist-led assault from the Bennite Left, many were greatly demoralised by witnessing so great a detachment from their ranks, but it did not prevent them from firmly turning their backs on the defectors. The Croslandite rump, for example, resisted the idea that the departees could still pronounce themselves social-democrats: David Lipsey, in a book honouring Crosland’s legacy, described their transformation even before they abandoned Labour as a ‘desertion of revisionism’, assailing them for knowing what they were against but not what they were for, other than ‘Europe’.<sup>755</sup> A similar attitude prevailed among the remnants of the Manifesto Group, of whom only five members of the executive committee (out of 12) stuck with the party. In a defiant communiqué written by two who stayed, Giles Radice and George Robertson, the Group proclaimed – on the day after the SDP was launched – that although ‘one or two of them still consider themselves to be Socialists, the new party, in alliance with Liberals and disaffected

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<sup>753</sup> SJL, Owen, D709/2/17/1/8 – Letter: David Owen to Dick Taverne, 11 December 1980. The Bad Godesberg conference in 1959 featured a repudiation by the German SPD of its Marxist heritage.

<sup>754</sup> SLO, Social Democratic Party Archives (SDP), 1 – ‘Declaration of Social Democracy’, 25 January 1981.

<sup>755</sup> Lipsey, ‘Crosland’s Socialism’, pp. 21, 26.

Tories, is bound to become more right wing and anti-union.’<sup>756</sup> Even the moderate XYZ Club and Fabian Society (the latter under Lipsey’s chairmanship) blackballed those among their membership who joined the SDP, decisions that caused much anguish at the time.<sup>757</sup>

However, as Radice and Robertson also understood, the defection of so many key personnel meant that the organised Labour right could now only win PLP elections if it started co-operating with other groups – especially the unions – and forging links with CLPs.<sup>758</sup> New factions were soon established to marshal the dispirited forces together in the absence of the now defunct CLV, whose officers had left virtually *en masse* to form, in Gerard Daly’s words, ‘a nascent organisation for the new party’.<sup>759</sup> One early example was the Labour Solidarity Campaign, formed by over 100 MPs in February 1981. On its first steering committee, the few who were associated with Jenkinsite or even Croslandite revisionism – such as Radice and Roy Hattersley – were considerably outnumbered by traditionalist right-wingers and centrists, many of whom had rejected factionalism during the Wilson and Callaghan years.<sup>760</sup> Like the Manifesto Group, they deplored the SDP as the thin end of the wedge, fuming that ‘Their decision to desert... can only increase the prospect of the return of another disastrous Tory government’.<sup>761</sup> But the avowal of ‘solidarity’ in the face of the Social Democrats’ treachery – and the belief that the new party was on the other side of the political divide – helped to further advance the ‘loyalist’, traditionalist dimension of the right at the expense of revisionism, removing any possibility of further strife but, arguably, also eliminating much of the capacity for intellectual regeneration that was possessed by many of the defectors.

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<sup>756</sup> LHASC, MANIF, 2/15 – Statement from Giles Radice and George Robertson, 25 March 1981.

<sup>757</sup> SLO, ROD, 3 – Circular letter from Giles Radice, 11 June 1981; BLPES, Sandelson, 5/3 – Letter: Neville Sandelson to David Lipsey, 11 June 1981.

<sup>758</sup> LHASC, MANIF, 2/15 – ‘Note on the Manifesto Group’s Future’, 14 January 1981.

<sup>759</sup> Gerard Daly, ‘The Campaign for Labour Victory and the Origins of the SDP’, *Contemporary Record*, 7:2 (1993), p. 303.

<sup>760</sup> Hayter, ‘Fightback of the Traditional Right’, Annex 6.

<sup>761</sup> *Labour Solidarity*, May 1981, p. 7.

### **The slow death of the ‘Mark II Labour Party’**

Although no policy aims were clarified until the party actually came into being, the announcement of the Limehouse Declaration was accompanied by another document, entitled ‘Twelve tasks for Social Democrats’. The first rudimentary attempt at fashioning a basic programme for the new party – dubbed ‘The Limehouse Declaration’, and published in March 1981 – was driven by the need to spurn ‘the politics of an inert centre merely representing the lowest common denominator between two extremes’. And yet as a policy statement the declaration was hardly inspiring, for the most part prioritising themes that would not have been considered unorthodox in revisionist circles, including upholding the mixed economy and the welfare state, ‘fair’ wealth distribution and a ‘classless’ society, and the maintenance of full employment. One reason for its timidity lies in the Gang of Four’s wish to attract as wide a group of people as possible; as the declaration put it, the SDP ‘would need the support of men and women in all parts of our society’ if it were to succeed.<sup>762</sup> This included, of course, the Liberal Party, which the likes of Jenkins and others wanted to enter into an electoral alliance with from the beginning. The party also hoped to attract those uncommitted radicals and neophytes who, in Marquand’s vision, would have provided the spark for a genuinely new conception of social-democracy.

But there were many other members who did not wish to forge a new consensus, so much as to restore the best from the past. These people often shared the nostalgia for the 1940s and 1950s that Jenkins himself expressed in his Dimpleby Lectures, and which was encapsulated by the journalist Peter Jenkins’s comment that it would ‘be a happier irony if in

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<sup>762</sup> SLO, SDP, 1 – ‘Declaration of Social Democracy’, 25 January 1981.

Britain the crumbling of the Old Order were to result in a continuity of the social democratic tradition and the virtues of the post-war period'.<sup>763</sup> They were also disproportionately likely to be ex-Labour voters, who had exulted in the Gaitskellite era before looking on with dismay at the failures of the Wilson and Callaghan administrations. Their desire was very simple: to become all that the Labour Party had formerly been, and which the present incarnation was not. What they wanted, to put it crudely, was a 'Mark II Labour Party' which would if successful have replaced the mother party in its entirety as the left-wing flank of the existing electoral system. It was in this spirit that Bill Rodgers's '90% of the vote' claim (see above) was made.

To begin with, such a beguiling vision enraptured even those at the very top, many of whom were still attached to the social-democratic values that had defined their political lives: Emily Robinson, writing in 2012, stated that the SDP tried to 'start a new chapter in British social democracy without – initially – breaking away from the socialist story and leaving themselves open to charges of inauthenticity, ruthlessness and betrayal.'<sup>764</sup> As late as November 1981, Shirley Williams continued to acclaim the SDP as 'the inheritors of the old Labour Party', while one unnamed parliamentarian defector admitted to Ivor Crewe and Anthony King that 'I wanted us simply to announce that we *were* the Labour Party.'<sup>765</sup> And yet that dawn was never to come about: the 'Mark II Labour Party' conception soon became supplanted by the progressive centrist vision associated with Jenkins and Marquand, so that eventually even the likes of Williams and Owen, who had only recently been engaged in trying to revive antique socialist traditions, disassociated themselves from it completely. But the expectation that the SDP should try to restore the values of yesteryear did not die

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<sup>763</sup> Peter Jenkins, 'The Crumbling of the Old Order', in Kennet (ed.) *Rebirth of Britain*, p. 59.

<sup>764</sup> Emily Robinson, *History, Heritage and Tradition in Contemporary British Politics* (Manchester, 2012), p. 125.

<sup>765</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 25 November 1981; Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford, 1995), p. 125.

immediately, and throughout 1981 and 1982 a number of controversies emerged that saw the party having to face up to reminders of its Labourist past.

The first indication of the trouble that lay ahead came in September 1981, with the defection of the Islington North MP, Michael O'Halloran. A lifelong trade unionist, O'Halloran was the doyen of the borough's Irish Catholic political culture. He was also a social conservative who had opposed abortion legislation, and was one of the few defecting MPs to have voted against EEC membership in 1975; such was his perceived incompatibility with the SDP that Crewe and King suggest that his decision was 'wholly opportunist', which would not have happened without the threat of deselection.<sup>766</sup> A few days after he switched sides, the party's Scottish Secretary informed the *Glasgow Herald* that 'it must be made clear the SDP is not a home for unsuccessful Labour MPs...the courageous example of those who so far have joined and who have already built such a successful and thriving organisation cannot be debased by the opportunism of failed men.', while at the Liberal Party conference that same week one delegate stated that 'we will never support Michael O'Halloran... He is exactly the sort of politician we have been fighting for so long'.<sup>767</sup> Douglas Eden even went on record to deny press accusations that the SDP was 'embarrassed' by O'Halloran's presence.<sup>768</sup>

The secession of a further 16 Labour councillors in Islington at the same time highlighted further potential for conflict. Although publicly welcomed by the SDP, their decision was received with a similar degree of cynicism to that which had greeted O'Halloran: one former colleague described the defecting councillors as 'very reactionary', while Ian Bradley – who contended that this episode signified an emerging division within the SDP – defined them as a 'different element in the membership', one that was

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<sup>766</sup> Crewe and King, *SDP*, p. 109.

<sup>767</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 14 and 17 September 1981.

<sup>768</sup> *Times*, 14 September 1981.

‘predominantly working class’ and ‘conservative in their outlook’.<sup>769</sup> The journalist and party member Christopher Huhne identified the defectors as relics from the ‘old right-wing Labour “machine”’ in the borough, who became lightning-rods for popular discontent with the Labour council’s performance even after they had defected to the SDP.<sup>770</sup> Their entrance led to a short factional war within the Islington party which the new defectors quickly lost, and in April 1982 seven of them stood as rival Social Democrats against the party’s official candidates in the upcoming elections, a move that led to their immediate expulsion.<sup>771</sup> The councillor who led this small deputation out of the party, Bill Bayliss, attributed the refusal of ‘trendy, middle-class socialists in the SDP’ to allow ‘working-class participation’ as the real reason behind his enforced departure.<sup>772</sup>

It was not only in Islington that situations like this prevailed: when party staffer Ruth Levy was sent to Tom Ellis’s Wrexham constituency in mid-1981, for example, she concluded that the regional Steering Committee was similarly controlled by a clique of ex-Labour councillors, who marginalised former Conservatives and maintained an ‘autocratic grip’ on procedure.<sup>773</sup> Although there was little evidence that such phenomena were anything other than isolated incidents, the fear they wrought was real: as David Owen later confided to Kenneth Harris, ‘the danger was that some of the old lags who had... come to us from the Labour Party would dominate our new party and would attempt to justify all their old Labour Party attitudes.’<sup>774</sup> In response, the party decided to review the constitutional procedures for choosing candidates, with the aim of placing the party’s ideological direction more securely in the hands of the leadership. In November a draft statement was produced which stipulated that any future converts would have their membership applications vetted ‘to ensure that such

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<sup>769</sup> *Guardian*, 9 September 1981; *Times*, 5 October 1981 and 2 December 1981.

<sup>770</sup> Christopher Huhne, ‘What Really Happened in Islington’, *Alliance*, June 1982.

<sup>771</sup> SLO, ROD, 40 – Letter: Bernard Doyle to H. Flynn, 6 April 1982.

<sup>772</sup> *Guardian*, 28 April 1982.

<sup>773</sup> SLO, ROD, 2f – ‘Report of a Visit to Wrexham, 26/27 May 1981’.

<sup>774</sup> Kenneth Harris, *David Owen, Personally Speaking* (London, 1987), p. 211.

applicants share the aims and purposes of the SDP', while a week later it was resolved that Owen and Rodgers would decide who should be allowed into the parliamentary caucus, notifying members that, after 1 January 1982, 'noone [sic] could assume that they would receive the party whip'.<sup>775</sup>

While this was happening, another controversy was brewing in a more esoteric corner of the party. Although the policy committee had already been established to provide a framework for a suitable programme, there were some in the SDP who believed that 'radical' new thinking would be best accomplished by an alternative, non-mainstream research group. This led Michael Young to suggest creating a Social Democratic equivalent of the Fabian Society, which in tribute to early twentieth-century ethical socialism he decided should be named after R. H. Tawney (see chapter one). Young's original ambition was to produce a journal 'that would have much more controversial articles in it' than was possible to produce 'under party auspices'.<sup>776</sup> His ecumenical approach to Centre-Left politics left him hopeful that Labour Party members might join the Society once it was launched; this was intended partially as a rebuke of the Fabians for their refusal to permit Social Democrats as members. 'The Tawneys', he averred, 'will be more tolerant than the Fabians'.<sup>777</sup>

But when Young discussed his ideas with other members of the Tawney Society's Provisional Committee, he found there was little appreciation for his plan. Joan Mitchell, an economics professor, chided him for presenting the Society as a 'disgruntled Fabian splinter', pointing out that 'we are members of the SDP... We must therefore distance ourselves more from our Labour past'.<sup>778</sup> Rabbi Julia Neuberger similarly felt that 'strong references to The Fabian Society' would leave a detrimental, 'backward-looking' impression, while Anthony

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<sup>775</sup> SLO, SDP, 2 – 'Draft Statement', 27 November 1981; Steering Committee minutes, 1 December 1981.

<sup>776</sup> SLO, Archives of the Tawney Society (TAW), 19 – Letter: Michael Young to Helen Price, 28 August 1981.

<sup>777</sup> SLO, TAW, 19 – Tawney Society draft statement, undated [1981].

<sup>778</sup> SLO, TAW, 19 – Letter: Joan Mitchell to Michael Young, 14 October 1981.

Lester – a former chairman of the Fabians – argued it did ‘not augur well for a new policy and research body, linked with a radical and progressive political movement, that it should be a response to internecine squabbling from the old politics’. Both Neuberger and Lester wished to encourage Liberals into the fold rather than social-democrats from Labour; doing so would, in Neuberger’s view, provide ‘hard thinking’ and a free exchange of views, while discouraging those who were encumbered by ‘romantic nostalgia’.<sup>779</sup>

Lester’s expressed discomfort over the society’s name was prescient, for what Young had failed to anticipate was how controversial his dedication to Tawney would be. The resurrection of such a ghost provoked disquiet from within Labour’s ranks, and not just among its residual social-democrats: Michael Foot accused the Society in the *Times* of seeking to ‘debase’ Tawney’s name, while Baroness Jeger wondered what the great man himself would think about his association with the new party.<sup>780</sup> Dismissive of these sneers, Young taunted his former comrades for behaving ‘as if we have stolen their clothes’.<sup>781</sup> But, by disclosing that he chose the name to exemplify ‘the roots of the SDP... in Britain’s democratic socialist tradition’, he irked those in his own camp who did not want their new party to be burdened by the past.<sup>782</sup> Leading the charge was John Horam, an SDP MP and the vice-president of the policy committee, who wrote to Young informing him that ‘Calling your Society after Tawney gives the impression that we are a socialist or mark II Labour Party. We are not – and the bulk of our members do not want it so.’ The whole initiative, he went on, ‘damages our attempts to attract Tory MPs and Tory peers, who we badly need at the moment, as we are clearly ludicrously unbalanced in parliament and this is hurting us a lot.’<sup>783</sup>

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<sup>779</sup> SLO, TAW, 19 – Letters: Julia Neuberger to Michael Young, 19 October 1981; Anthony Lester to Michael Young, 22 October 1981.

<sup>780</sup> *Times*, 2 and 4 February 1982.

<sup>781</sup> *Social Democrat*, May 1982.

<sup>782</sup> SLO, TAW, 19 – ‘Join the Tawney Society’, undated [1981/2].

<sup>783</sup> SLO, TAW, 19 – Letter: John Horam to Michael Young, 21 February 1982.

Horam was correct to say that party activists did not especially favour a ‘Mark II Labour Party’ approach. Many Social Democrats were clearly more concerned in creating what one of their number described as a ‘new climate, a new scene’ away from the ‘bickering and division’ of the past.<sup>784</sup> This meant attracting not just disaffected Conservatives but everyone who was willing, from all parties and none; indeed, as Herbert Doring found when he surveyed CSD attendees in October 1982, a majority of activists had not previously been members of any party at all.<sup>785</sup> What complicated matters, however, was that a section of the grassroots *did* justify Young’s focus on establishing a suitably ‘socialist’ image. Doring, for example, also found in his survey that combining former Labour Party members with those who had previously ‘felt close’ to that party gave a figure of 58 per cent of the total membership, and he reported that refugees from Labour were more likely than other members to exhibit some kind of class-consciousness.<sup>786</sup> John Bochel and David Denver, meanwhile, discovered in their analysis of the SDP in Scotland that members were still on average inclined to place themselves on the centre-left, rather than in the middle.<sup>787</sup>

By the time the fracas surrounding the Tawney Society came out into the open, the frustration many felt at the party’s direction had become obvious. Unease at the perceived middle-class identity of the SDP permeated their complaints, as was displayed in the letters of the party newsletter, the *Social Democrat*. During the first round of elections to the National Committee one correspondent asked why none of the candidates were ‘miners, carpenters, shop workers, hospital workers, rank-and-file trade unionists, and many other ordinary working people’, while another expressed disappointment that all bar one of those who were elected lived in London.<sup>788</sup> ‘Where are the working class?’, asked an activist from

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<sup>784</sup> *Times*, 17 February 1982.

<sup>785</sup> Herbert Doring, ‘Who are the Social Democrats?’, *New Society*, 8 September 1983.

<sup>786</sup> Doring, ‘Who are the Social Democrats?’.

<sup>787</sup> John Bochel and David Denver, ‘The SDP and the Left-Right Dimension’, *British Journal of Political Science*, 14 (1984), pp. 388-9.

<sup>788</sup> *Social Democrat*, 8 October 1982 and 5 November 1982.

Essex in relation to the party's parliamentary hopefuls, 'I feel that I am... an ordinary working class man and can't identify myself with these PPCs'.<sup>789</sup> Labourist attitudes had clearly not disappeared, and it was perhaps predictable that some would go further and defend their old home when it inevitably came under attack. 'It is not only easy, but dangerous to spend our time knocking the Labour Party', wrote the East Sussex representative on the CSD, in response to an article that had derided Labour as the 'loony left', '[but] this holier-than-thou attitude comes ill from a Party which contains many supporters who quitted the Labour Party after genuine heart-searching and doubt.'<sup>790</sup> Another letter from the same issue echoed these sentiments, pointing out that 'We have always been Labour stalwarts, but for obvious reasons have now become members of the SDP. If you wish to win members from the Labour Party, remarks like this will not help.'<sup>791</sup>

Interestingly, in the same way that Young celebrated Tawney as a paragon of democratic socialism, so those who were attached to this ideal often looked to Hugh Gaitskell's leadership, in particular, as a symbol of what the SDP should be. Some, such as the businessman Louis Mintz, believed that Gaitskellites like himself had chosen to back the party because 'they represented the middle-of-the-road and the average clear-thinking man's point of view', much as their hero had done.<sup>792</sup> Another supporter, Inigo Bing, in criticising the party for obsessing over 'its own newness' and conveying the image of being without 'tradition and roots', argued that Gaitskell's 'courage and intellectual consistency' could overcome this shallowness by giving the SDP 'a faith and vision in good years and bad.'<sup>793</sup> But there were others of a similar persuasion who cited Gaitskell as a means of expressing their disappointment at what the party was turning into. 'We believed that the SDP would

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<sup>789</sup> *Social Democrat*, 11 February 1983.

<sup>790</sup> *Social Democrat*, 22 October 1982.

<sup>791</sup> *Social Democrat*, 22 October 1982.

<sup>792</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 5/3 – Letter: Louis Mintz to Neville Sandelson, 28 September 1981.

<sup>793</sup> *Guardian*, 28 March 1983.

break new ground while continuing all that had been best in the tradition of Attlee, Bevin and Gaitskell', two members from Hampshire wrote in a letter to the *Times* after the Tawney Society 'scandal' broke, but it 'now stands clearly revealed as a middle-class, right-of-centre party. It most emphatically is not a social democratic party in the historical usage of the term'.<sup>794</sup>

Of course, for those committed to turning the concept into something new there was no wish to retreat to the limitations of 'historical usage'. Although Roy Jenkins later claimed that he had always wanted the SDP to be in 'the tradition of the party of Attlee and Gaitskell', it is notable that he and the rest of the 'Gang' did not seek to use the latter's memory to encourage former Labour voters to defect.<sup>795</sup> Some of them were prepared to state why they no longer believed in the old-time religion. 'Social democracy is in fact a radical creed', David Marquand explained in 1982, 'but the lower-case social democrats of the Fifties and Sixties were seen as moderates, not as radicals'.<sup>796</sup> Marquand considered Gaitskell too hamstrung by his 'Labour loyalties' to have been successful as a reformist leader, and admonished Social Democrats like Bing and Mintz for believing 'we could succeed where Gaitskell failed': not only were the hard left entrenched than before, but 'the Labour Party of Attlee, Bevin and Gaitskell has vanished with the society that gave birth to it'.<sup>797</sup> This, then, was the outcome of his ongoing quest to create a new social-democracy: not only were 'Old Right' traditionalist types like O'Halloran unwelcome, but so too were those Gaitskellite revisionists who, just a few years beforehand, would have been viewed as allies.

Only one senior party figure was (predictably) willing to proclaim his admiration for the Gaitskellite brand of politics – Stephen Haseler, who, when outlining his vision for the

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<sup>794</sup> *Times*, 3 February 1982.

<sup>795</sup> Roy Jenkins, *A Partnership of Principle* (London, 1985), p. 35.

<sup>796</sup> Marquand, *Russet-Coated Captains*, p. 13.

<sup>797</sup> *Guardian*, 15 October 1979; Marquand, *Russet-Coated Captains*, p. 13; Marquand, 'What the Social Democrats Should Try to Achieve'.

new party in 1980, eulogised Gaitskell's 'tough-minded social democracy' as the 'missing ingredient in British politics during the depressing decades of the 1960s and '70s', declaring that 'there was nothing wistful or nostalgic in seeking to recreate it today.'<sup>798</sup> Haseler's experience in the Social Democrats is a useful illustration of what the SDP could have looked like had it decided to take the 'Mark II Labour Party' approach with a hefty dollop of idiosyncratic populism thrown in. In late 1981 he tried to seize the initiative from the Gang of Four by putting up eight 'London Social Democrats' (all members of his still extant ginger group, the SDA) to stand in the GLC election, which the SDP's steering committee had advised the party not to contest on the basis that it would 'not be ready'.<sup>799</sup> During these elections the SDA published a manifesto, which included promises to keep bus fares low, 'put "Bobby" back onto the beat', and give council houses away for free to long-term tenants.<sup>800</sup> This, as Haseler later explained, showcased the mixture of 'Right' and 'Left' he believed 'ordinary people' wanted, which shied away from 'fashionable, "progressive" by-ways' in favour of the 'crucial tradition of British politics' represented by Gaitskell. Subsequent policies and ideas in this vein included democratisation of the House of Lords, a rebalancing towards vocational education and away from Oxbridge, hostility to the 'obsolete values and practices of Old Upper England', and support for American-style modernity but not for 'Eurocentricism'.<sup>801</sup>

None of the SDA's local election candidates was elected, although Haseler personally secured enough votes to ensure the defeat of the notorious hard-left leader of Lambeth borough council, 'Red Ted' Knight. A further opportunity to influence the party's direction

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<sup>798</sup> Haseler, 'Towards a Centre Party'.

<sup>799</sup> Their decision to stand caused a row between the party leadership and the SDA's national organiser, Roger Fox, who accused David Owen of 'stabbing them in the back' by making some 'not very complimentary' remarks about their candidates. See SJL, Owen, D709/2/17/1/8 – Letter: Roger Fox to David Owen, 11 March 1981.

<sup>800</sup> BLPES, Eden, 6 – London Social Democrats manifesto, undated [1981]; SJL, Owen, D709/2/17/1/8 – election leaflet, 7 May 1981.

<sup>801</sup> Stephen Haseler, 'Can the Social Democrats Devise Policies for Political Power', *Encounter*, January 1982.

beckoned, however, when elections for the role of its president took place later that year. Announcing that he would stand as a candidate, Haseler argued that the SDP presidency should be held by a grassroots figure who was not an MP. Firing a shot across the bows of the other two candidates, Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers, he declared that ‘The time for ‘Gangs’ is over’, warning the party that it must not become ‘an exclusive club for an established élite and their attendants.’<sup>802</sup> There was, however, an inconsistency to this approach: despite imploring the SDP to ‘break completely with the past’, Haseler lectured his opponents for their lack of integrity during Labour’s 1970s battles, listing events which they had, in his view, either defended or ignored when in government. ‘I opposed them openly and publicly as I oppose all intolerance and extremist fanaticism’, he claimed, ‘I am the only candidate in this election who did so.’<sup>803</sup> By pursuing these ancient grievances he recalled the unpalatable facets of the Labour Party, rather than those virtuous elements he wished to resuscitate in the SDP. His candidacy soon fell on stony ground, and when the ballot was conducted in August he came last with 14 per cent of the vote, polling under a quarter that of Williams, the eventual winner.

A comparison with David Owen is perhaps instructive, for the latter’s attempt at capturing the party leadership the month before – although similarly unsuccessful – demonstrates how a ‘left-wing’ identity could be more skilfully deployed without beckoning the ghosts of the past. Although he shared with Haseler a certain dislike for ‘trendy’ enthusiasms – displaying what Marquand called a ‘no-nonsense populism’ – Owen was careful not to direct his remarks to a specifically ‘working-class’ or ‘ex-Labour’ audience.<sup>804</sup> Instead, in an interview published shortly before the leadership ballot was conducted, he stated that:

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<sup>802</sup> CAC, ALBU, 35 – ‘Dr Stephen Haseler Statement’, August 1982.

<sup>803</sup> CAC, ALBU, 35 – ‘Haseler Statement’.

<sup>804</sup> Marquand, *Progressive Dilemma*, p. 188.

The strength of the Social Democratic Party is its newness. It is able to say, “look, we are a new party”. That is one of the most powerful electoral assets that we have, and we must not lose that sense of newness.<sup>805</sup>

Owen’s enthusiasm for the party’s novelty was clearly a pivot from his recent lauding of old-style ethical socialism (indeed, throughout most of the party’s first year he still wanted to align the SDP with the Socialist International, with the hope of applying for membership once the party had ‘showed [its] strength in by-elections’).<sup>806</sup> But rather than damaging him, his identification with socialism had established him in the mind of party activists as a candidate of the left, and although he lost the leadership race his 40 per cent share of the vote made him the favourite when the position became vacant again once Roy Jenkins resigned a year later. Owen’s example illustrates that, while the ‘Mark II Labour Party’ model was too redolent of what the majority of its members and voters wanted to leave behind, the spirit of radicalism was best received if presented as something irreproachably new.

### **The SDP and the trade unions**

Throughout the first year of its existence the SDP continued to grow in numbers. By June 1981, the total membership stood at 54,000. This disguised sizeable disparities that existed between regions: whereas the East of England had 134 members for every constituency, in Scotland the equivalent number was only 33.<sup>807</sup> Two surveys, both conducted in late 1981,

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<sup>805</sup> David Owen, ‘Why I am standing for leader’, *Alliance*, July 1982.

<sup>806</sup> SLO, SDP, 1 – David Owen, ‘Relations with Socialist International’, 5 May 1981.

<sup>807</sup> Crewe and King, *SDP*, Appendix 5, p. 490.

attempted to discover what the ideological complexion of the party was at membership level.<sup>808</sup> They found that, on many key issues, members for the most part tended to unite behind one single position. On two main aspects of revisionist doctrine – NATO membership and a managed incomes policy – the 5,568 area party members interviewed for *Weekend World* in November voiced their approval by overwhelming majorities of more than 90 per cent, while support for Keynesian (i.e. reflationary) economic policy, intervention in industry and retaining nuclear weapons was all at similar, albeit lower, levels.<sup>809</sup> When considering the once-important European question, 95 per cent of those surveyed by *Weekend World* endorsed Britain's affiliation to the EEC. There was in fact very little traction inside the party for anti-Market revisionism, and among the parliamentary cohort it was notable how few from that stable were lured into joining the new party; although nine of the 22 defecting MPs who had been in parliament during the Commons vote in 1971 had obeyed the three-line whip against entry, most of these MPs had since become reconciled to staying in the EEC, with only three relative late-comers to the SDP – Michael O'Halloran, George Cunningham and Bruce Douglas-Mann – maintaining their stance against membership after the 1975 referendum.

If European entry was no longer the *cause celebre* it once had been, it was on industrial matters that the SDP found itself navigating the stormy waters caused by the party's desire to extract itself from Labourism. Jenkins's Dimpleby lecture stated that a key problem with the Labour Party was its reliance on the 'power and money of the trade union leadership', which in turn led to an undemocratic and malign influence at the heart of government.<sup>810</sup> 'Reform' of the unions was thus presented as key to the new party's agenda for modernising Britain's economy and society, but it held a further attraction for Social

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<sup>808</sup> The results of both surveys are to be found in Crewe and King, *SDP*, Appendix 5, pp. 503-4.

<sup>809</sup> Crewe and King, *SDP*, Appendix 5, p. 504.

<sup>810</sup> BLPES, Sandelson, 5/5 – Jenkins, 'Home Thoughts', p. 14.

Democrats in that it presented an opportunity to dispel the proletarian image and ‘tribal’ working-class politics – epitomised by the archaic practices and attitudes of the unions – that they believed were corrupting Labour. This led to an obvious dilemma: would shunning the unions as part of the ‘old politics’ infringe on attempts to enlist them in the struggle for reform? The SDP never saw the need to choose, instead tackling the issue by attacking the ‘barons’ in the TUC while promising simultaneously to give ‘the unions back to their members’. Alas, not every social-democrat – either inside or outside of the party – accepted such thinking; those who still retained loyalty to the unions or disliked the party’s move away from Labourism were disconcerted by the scapegoating of the one section of civil society that could still defend working-class interests.

When the party was launched there was a general understanding that the SDP should at least try to cultivate connections inside the wider Labour movement: an early meeting of the steering committee, for example, stressed ‘the desire to have close and friendly relations with Trade Unions’, which Tom Bradley argued would only be achieved if the SDP strove to ‘link directly with the grass roots trade unionists.’<sup>811</sup> However, few of the ex-Labour defectors in parliament had much first-hand experience of industrial relations: just eight of 28 possessed union sponsorship – which they then had to forfeit – while only Bradley had actually been employed as a union official. Many, having come through the disintegration of the social contract and the persistent industrial unrest, were convinced that the unions had to have their power circumscribed if Britain was to once again to be put on an even footing. Putting pressure on them was the fact that members were clearly unhappy with what they perceived as the unions’ abuse of their privileges: both of the 1981 surveys, for example, found near-unanimous support for compulsory ballots in trade union elections, and majority

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<sup>811</sup> SLO, SDP, 1 – Steering Committee minutes, 10 April 1981.

approval for both the curtailment of unions' immunities against legal action and the elimination of the closed shop.<sup>812</sup>

The party's membership intake and traumatic gestation thus fed into a new spirit, one which the economist Robin Marris described as summarised by a 'general hostility to unions'.<sup>813</sup> Lewis Minkin claimed that the SDP went on to become 'more preoccupied, even obsessed, with the sins of the unions than with almost any other British institution', demonstrating the 'exhilaration of being able to say exactly what they liked about the unions and the Labour Party.'<sup>814</sup> The overall impression was often one of impatience towards a movement that had come to outlive its own usefulness, and whose admirable founding principles had gone awry. A particularly ferocious example of such an attitude came in June 1981, when Bill Rodgers issued a press release accusing union leaders of being 'guilty men' and 'out of touch', whose 'arrogant show of political muscle' and 'spineless leadership' had ushered in the Winter of Discontent. 'They wring their hands at the decline and fall of the Labour Party', he thundered, 'But they must take the blame.'<sup>815</sup> Over the next two years Rodgers was, perhaps surprisingly, the most persistent critic of the union 'establishment' from within the SDP; the GMWU organiser John Edmonds, speaking to Minkin years later, commented that 'Not until [Rodgers] left the Party did we find out how ashamed he was of us. It was a humiliating experience.'<sup>816</sup>

Edmonds' perception that the SDP's founders were hostile to their values at least partially explains why several moderate union 'barons' queued up to denounce the party even before it was launched: David Basnett, the GMWU's leader, launched the first salvo in

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<sup>812</sup> Crewe and King, *SDP*, Appendix 5, p. 503.

<sup>813</sup> Robin Marris, 'The Politics of Rationalism: Reflexions on the Economics of the SDP', *Political Quarterly*, 54:1 (1983), p. 27.

<sup>814</sup> Minkin, *Contentious Alliance*, p. 221.

<sup>815</sup> SLO, ROD, 1 – Press Release, 12 June 1981.

<sup>816</sup> Minkin, *Contentious Alliance*, p. 224n.

January 1981, announcing that ‘no trade union will support the Social Democrats’.<sup>817</sup> In one union after another loyalty quickly prevailed, and this was true even of those unions that the SDP hoped could be lured into a position of sympathy. During the steering committee’s initial discussions on the matter it was hoped that unions unaffiliated with Labour, such as the National Union of Teachers and the local authority employees’ union Nalگو, would be ‘an important area of support’, but the latter in particular proved to be a disappointment, continuing its tradition of political neutrality by rejecting ties not just with Labour but with all parties.<sup>818</sup> Those affiliated to Labour proved even less susceptible to the new party’s charms. For example, when a motion was put forward in April by members of the steelworkers’ union, the ITSC, to ‘force through a review of party loyalty’ – which their leader, William Sirs, warned could encourage ‘more and more comrades’ to leave Labour and join the ‘new group’ – it was not even carried when it came to conference later in the year.<sup>819</sup>

All of this frustrated the SDP, especially when the party was at its zenith: David Owen was not alone in expressing consternation that by sticking to a subaltern relationship with Labour the unions were shunning the party which ‘shows every sign of forming the next Government with the Liberals.’<sup>820</sup> The source of most disappointment was probably the EETPU, viewed as the friendliest union towards the party and still led at this stage by the mercurial Frank Chapple. Chapple was one of only five senior trade unionists to sign the Limehouse Declaration, and many in the party hoped that he would switch sides. There were good grounds for optimism. Chapple’s despair at the dogmatism and militancy engulfing industrial relations in the 1970s, as recounted in chapter three, made him appreciative of the need for plurality in the electoral system, which he believed would break the political

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<sup>817</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 27 March 1981.

<sup>818</sup> SLO, SDP, 1 – Steering Committee minutes, 10 April 1981; Mike Ironside and Roger Seifert, *Facing up to Thatcherism: The History of NALGO, 1979-1993* (Oxford, 1993), p. 180.

<sup>819</sup> *Times*, 13 April 1981; *Guardian*, 18 June 1981.

<sup>820</sup> SLO, SDP, 43A – David Owen, ‘Annual Woodcock Lecture’, 14 January 1982.

duopoly that he held responsible for ‘reinforc[ing] the idea of class in our society’.<sup>821</sup> It seems that he was also prepared to give money to the defectors’ embryonic project: after he signed the Declaration the EETPU, according to Ian Bradley, provided the CSD with office space in London, while a Conservative MP disclosed that Chapple had told him he been financing its operations prior to the party’s official launch.<sup>822</sup> He even went so far as to publicly endorse the SDP MP John Grant for re-election in 1983, to open disapproval from the TUC – although he emphasised that he did so as a ‘personal friend’ of Grant, who had been sponsored by the EETPU when in the Labour Party until his defection.<sup>823</sup>

And yet Chapple never viewed the SDP as a serious replacement for Labour. A Conservative Research Department memo reckoned in February 1981 that he would be ‘unlikely to throw in his lot’ with them, and so it proved.<sup>824</sup> ‘While finding himself ‘in sympathy’ with the CSD’s founders, he did not think that ‘dropping out of the party or writing it off is going to serve the purposes for which the Labour Party was formed.’<sup>825</sup> Instead he channelled much of his energies into reviving the Labour right, a project that he had embarked on before the split (see chapter three). Chapple also remained aware that his own union – not to mention the wider movement – would not tolerate disaffiliation. The EETPU paid no money into the SDP’s general election fund and none of their candidates was endorsed, and when Chapple gave way to Eric Hammond as general secretary in 1984 a return to the union’s Labourist background seemed inevitable. Although similar to Chapple in

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<sup>821</sup> MRC, Chapple, MSS.387/6/CH/48 – Texts of speeches and interviews: 7<sup>th</sup> Mountbatten Lecture, November 1984.

<sup>822</sup> Bradley, *Breaking the Mould?*, p. 93; MTF, THCR2/1/4/55 f119 – Letter: Stephen Hastings to Margaret Thatcher, 4 February 1981. ([www.margarethatcher.org/document/153058](http://www.margarethatcher.org/document/153058))

<sup>823</sup> John Lloyd indicates that Grant was a big influence on Chapple’s thinking in this period. Chapple, *Sparks Fly!*, p. 183; Interview with John Lloyd, 19 February 2015. See also Calum Aikman, ‘Frank Chapple: A Thoughtful Trade Union Moderniser’, in Peter Ackers and Alastair J. Reid (eds), *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain: Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 211-42.

<sup>824</sup> WES, Papers of the Conservative Research Department (CRD), 4/6/13 – Memorandum: David Nicholson to Alan Howarth *et al*, 2 February 1981.

<sup>825</sup> Chapple, ‘A Democratic Labour Party Or ...?’.

his pugnacity, Hammond believed that many of the ‘privileges and freedoms’ the unions enjoyed were the product of the ‘trade union-Labour Party relationship’, and it was he who was instrumental in encouraging the EETPU rank-and-file to approve the political fund with Labour when the issue was balloted among members in 1985.<sup>826</sup>

Having failed to entice the unions away from their traditional home, the SDP soon found itself having to navigate the strife caused by the Employment Bill, which was presented by the Government in February 1982. The bill was advocated by its principal architect, the employment secretary Norman Tebbit, as a ‘modest measure’ for improving industrial relations: its main provisions were to restrict the definition of a trade dispute; a curtailing of secondary action and picketing; a removal of the immunity for action in tort which opened up trade unions to damages for unlawful action; and a tightening of the laws of the closed shop, raising the voting threshold for their creation to 80 per cent and establishing compensation facilities for dismissed workers. The rationale was to curb union power and thereby improve the position of the rank-and-file – but to do so without the statutory incomes policy that would inhibit collective bargaining.

The bill was reviled by both the Labour Party and the union hierarchy as a sign of things to come, but it left the Social Democrats deeply divided for the first time since the party was formed. Among the parliamentary body, five of 27 SDP MPs voted against it and a further five abstained when the second reading passed through the Commons. The viewpoint of this minority was visceral: John Grant described it to the press as a ‘bad bill’ which would have a detrimental effect on industrial relations, while Bruce Douglas-Mann thought it would do more harm ‘than leaving the situation alone’.<sup>827</sup> Outside of parliament, many experts who were sympathetic to the SDP also registered their objections: the Cambridge professor H. A.

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<sup>826</sup> Eric Hammond, ‘Labour handicaps us when... the ballot is so crucial’, *Contact*, December 1984.

<sup>827</sup> *Guardian*, 6 February 1982; SLO, ROD, 5 – Letter: Bruce Douglas-Mann to Bill Rodgers, 16 February 1982.

Turner warned Bill Rodgers that supporting the bill would needlessly inflame the unions and frustrate the potential for co-operation – a point also made by Douglas-Mann, who specifically referred to the impact the bill would have on incomes policy.<sup>828</sup> Rodgers, however, was unsympathetic. The decision in favour ‘had to be made’, he explained to Turner, arguing subsequently that trade unionists in the party supported it and that ‘legislation is an inescapable public response to [the unions’] failure to put their own house in order.’<sup>829</sup> But even he conceded that a certain amount of damage had been done, and in his response to Douglas-Mann he expressed anxiety about the need to maintain unity in the bill’s aftermath.<sup>830</sup>

By voting for the Government’s reform package the SDP further embellished the idea that they were ‘anti-union’, making it essential for them to contrive opportunities which would convey their own ideas in response. Leading the way was an informal discussion group on industrial issues, with Bradley at its head, which convened in late 1981 as the ‘Trade Union Reform Group’. Its members – most of whom retained some connection to the union apparatus – had been hostile to the Employment Bill, albeit divided on whether to oppose it or recommend abstention. They advised that the best way to defuse industrial conflict was to appeal to trade unionists beyond their ‘sectional interests’, adopt a ‘positive attitude towards reform’, and refrain from ‘union bashing’.<sup>831</sup> Their long-term role was to produce a template that would determine how the unions could be reformed under a future social-democratic government, while avoiding the punitive stance of the present one. One of the Group’s key figures, Tony Halmos, had already fashioned a tentative strategy for dealing with the thorny issue of trade union political funding, which many Social Democrats believed

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<sup>828</sup> SLO, ROD, 6 – Letter: H.A. Turner to Bill Rodgers, 25 February 1982.

<sup>829</sup> SLO, ROD, 6 – Letters: Bill Rodgers to H.A. Turner, 18 February and 4 March 1982.

<sup>830</sup> SLO, ROD, 5 – Letter: Bill Rodgers to Bruce Douglas-Mann, 2 March 1982.

<sup>831</sup> SLO, SDP, 43d5 – Reform Group minutes, 2 February 1982.

was necessary to wean grassroots unionists away from Labour.<sup>832</sup> Together with two other members of the Group – the former industrial relations officer Roger Liddle and EETPU staffer Roger Rosewell – he was subsequently given the responsibility for producing a ‘green paper’ that would amass their ideas into one coherent programme.

This document, entitled *Reforming the Trade Unions*, was – as Minkin suggests – ‘progress towards a ‘new model’ trade unionism different in significant respects from existing practice and embodying a considerable break with the traditions of the Labour Movement.’<sup>833</sup> Their reforms centred on providing a legal framework which could both protect the rights of unions and remind them of their responsibilities, focusing primarily in the latter case on their democratic procedures. The abiding concern was to fulfil the Group’s mission to ‘return the trade unions to their members’, and it was in this spirit that policies such as secret postal balloting in elections of executive positions were mooted, alongside a charter that would guarantee employees’ rights. But the paper’s authors also extended an olive branch to the unions as organisations too, promising to amend the law to allow them to protect their funds from ‘unanticipated legislation’, alongside further sanctions on employers who refused to accept the legitimacy of a union’s right to bargain once they had won majority support from the workforce.

But with the carrot came the stick. The link between Labour and the unions was challenged directly, with the adoption of earlier proposals by Halmos to amend the law on the political levy by changing the default position from ‘contracting out’ to ‘contracting in’, giving union members the freedom to choose whether to pay it or not. The authors recommended ‘limitations’ on secondary action and picketing, with union liability for any breaches that had occurred. Strikes by public employees in certain areas were also to be made

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<sup>832</sup> SLO, SDP, 43d5 – Reform Group minutes, 7 January 1982.

<sup>833</sup> Minkin, *Contentious Alliance*, p. 223.

illegal without prior reference of the dispute to arbitration, while action was to be taken on the pre-entry closed shop, with post-entry closed shops to be permitted only if ‘substantial workforce support’ was in evidence. The authors made no secret of their desire to punish the union leaderships for their anachronistic practices: ‘Britain’s trade unions have failed their members unlike unions in many other countries in Western Europe’, with the TUC showing a ‘remarkable inability to drag itself into the final quarter of the twentieth century. Like many other British institutions the unions have failed to modernise themselves sufficiently far or fast.’ Only by breaking free of their ‘century old patterns of recruitment and growth’, the paper intoned, would the unions be propelled into the modern age.<sup>834</sup>

*Reforming the Trade Unions* was received with equanimity by most of the press, who merely noted that it followed in the slipstream of the Government’s bill (‘Mr Tebbit has effectively stolen the SDP’s populist, union reform clothes’ said the *Guardian*’s John Torode, himself a member of both the party and the Reform Group).<sup>835</sup> Several attendees at the party’s consultative conference in October 1982 were, however, cautious about the paper’s impact: one thought it a ‘half-way house’ for not fully restoring the immunities from law prohibited by the Employment Act, while another argued that it was ‘authoritarian’ to dictate to the unions what their future would be rather than ‘try[ing] first to talk’ to them. Many also pointed to the flaws of management (which used fear of unemployment ‘as its weapon’ in the opinion of one, and was ‘reactionary’ and ‘autocratic’ according to another) as the real cause of poor workplace relations.<sup>836</sup> The emphasis on failure and the condemnatory language used throughout the paper had also been noticed: one West Midlands councillor wrote to the *Social Democrat* soon after the conference announcing that he had become ‘sick and tired of attacks

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<sup>834</sup> *Reforming the Trade Unions*, SDP Green Paper 7 (London, 1982), pp. 1-9.

<sup>835</sup> *Guardian*, 22 December 1982.

<sup>836</sup> SLO, SDP, 43d5 – ‘Industrial Democracy and Trade Union Reform’, 13 October 1982; *Social Democrat*, 19 November 1982.

on so-called excessive union power and union leaders', which he believed had 'alienated too many trade unionists'.<sup>837</sup>

Many of those who were most protective of the movement's integrity joined the Association of Social Democratic Trade Unionists (ASDTU), a grassroots-orientated party organisation established earlier in the year by the former CLV officer Ben Stoneham.<sup>838</sup> The official nature of the ASDTU meant it was never likely to be a fifth column for anti-leadership mutiny, but it did act as a base for those party members who were prepared to hit back publicly when the parliamentary leadership was overcome by a surfeit of critical zeal. One example of this came from Charles Westley of the AUEW, who castigated the party's leaders for 'letting the trade unions down in their hour of need' after they ignored the call by the TUC to support a sympathy strike on behalf of NHS workers.<sup>839</sup> Another member prepared to voice his displeasure was the president of the Clearing Banks Union, Jack Britz, who defended the unions from the accusation made by George Cunningham that their restrictive practices were the cause of low pay rather than unscrupulous employers and ineffective legislation.<sup>840</sup> (Britz, incidentally, was among those arguing for the SDP to attract the working class by representing, as he put it, 'all that was best in the Labour Party', thus indicating how a trade union affiliation frequently overlapped with adherence to the 'Mark II Labour Party' position.)<sup>841</sup>

Both the ASDTU and other Social Democrats interested in the unions expended a considerable amount of energy on one particular area: industrial democracy. Having briefly come into vogue in the aftermath of the Bullock report, the idea that there should be a transformation in how workplaces were governed became a totem of the party's 'radical'

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<sup>837</sup> *Social Democrat*, 19 November 1982.

<sup>838</sup> SLO, SDP, 12 – Ben Stoneham, 'An Association of Social Democratic Trade Unionists', 25 January 1982.

<sup>839</sup> *Social Democrat*, 22 October 1982.

<sup>840</sup> *Social Democrat*, 22 April 1983.

<sup>841</sup> *Social Democrat*, 19 November 1982.

spirit. The first initiative in this direction came with the formation of an Industrial Democracy ‘working party’, as originally suggested by Roger Liddle in October 1981. Its membership was noticeably different from that of the Reform Group: almost all were solicitors, managers or academics – including Lord Bullock himself – with no one present from the unions (Frank Chapple – not a party member – declined the invitation to join on the grounds it ‘could be used against me’).<sup>842</sup> The working party soon evolved into the Industrial Democracy Group, and in 1982 it produced a green paper entitled *Democracy at Work*. Attacking the ‘outdated ideologies’ of the ‘two old political parties’ for inhibiting the trends towards participation and cooperation found in other European countries, the paper recommended the introduction of an Industrial Democracy Act that would oblige private companies and public sector bodies with more than 1,000 employees to set up works councils and employee share-ownership schemes. Perhaps aware of how the Bullock report had been criticised by industrialists as too heavily influenced by TUC opinion, the authors were keen to avoid coming down either on the side of capital or of labour, arguing that private enterprises would benefit from increased morale and better employee productivity while trade unions could reap the rewards from a better-informed workforce.<sup>843</sup>

When drafts were circulated to various party bodies throughout mid-1982 the reception was generally positive. There were, however, reservations about how industrial democracy would actually work, with the different functions of the consulted groups informing their criticisms. So the party’s Industry and Finance Group, for instance, concluded that industrial democracy was ‘good for British industry’, but worried about many of the terms used (such as ‘works councils’), which it claimed were too redolent of ‘tea and toilets’

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<sup>842</sup> SLO, SDP, 43d4 – ‘Industrial Democracy Working Party’, October 1981; Letter: Frank Chapple to Michael Shanks, 15 January 1982.

<sup>843</sup> *Democracy at Work*, Green Paper 6 (London, 1982), pp. 1-22.

proletarianism and not of the ‘new and innovatory’ approach they wanted.<sup>844</sup> John Torode was even more disappointed: upon receiving the draft, he informed Bill Rodgers that, rather than presenting industrial democracy as ‘an extension of individual and collective freedoms’ as he had wanted, it read like a grubby compromise with ‘union bureaucrats’.<sup>845</sup> Others, in contrast, thought the proposals were too radically removed from existing union practices. The ASDTU, for example, recorded the ‘strong feeling’ among its members ‘that non-trade unionists should not be disproportionately represented’ in any agreements.<sup>846</sup> Similarly, the West Cheshire area party, although it judged *Democracy at Work* to be of ‘fundamental importance’, voiced the Labourist perspective that worker-directors would ‘cease to have anything in common with their fellow workmen’, emphasising that only a mass-participation model could work.<sup>847</sup>

One of the purposes of the party’s industrial democracy policies was to persuade voters that they were part of a responsible, moderate package. But, although both those proposals and the paper on trade union reform were well-received, the fact its leaders had decided that they needed to move beyond Labourist assumptions unsettled a section of the party’s industrial support. This element viewed social-democracy in much the same way it always had, as a political vehicle to help meet the needs of the working class with the assistance of the unions. The problem was that the pressures on the party to demonstrate that it was transformative and ‘new’ encouraged its leaders to view the unions as the bearers of anachronistic and backward sentiments, which they believed were bedevilling industrial politics. Thus, the dominant strain of thought inside the SDP, influenced strongly by the influx of neophytes and non-Labourites, rejected any kind of sustainable, organic link with

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<sup>844</sup> SLO, SDP, 43d4 – ‘Industry and Finance Group – Industrial Democracy Committee, 8 November 1982.

<sup>845</sup> SLO, ROD, 6 – Letter: John Torode to Bill Rodgers, 15 June 1982.

<sup>846</sup> SLO, SDP, 43d5 – Wendy Buckley, ‘SDP Trade Unionists’ Conference’, 9 June 1982.

<sup>847</sup> SLO, SDP, 43d4 – ‘Comments of West Cheshire SDP on Green Paper 6’, undated.

the labour movement, and so cultivated a mood which emphasised recent failures and the need to 'reform' (rather than support) trade union structures.

### **Conclusion**

The creation of the SDP led to a battle between old and new, as the political traditions that had conditioned the thinking of many of its founder members came into the conflict with the alternative forms of politics that everyone in the new party, to a greater or lesser extent, hoped to embrace. For Roy Jenkins, this manifested itself as a quiet tension between the yearning he still felt for the stability of 1950s moderate politics and his more recent belief that the entire system needed to be radically overhauled. For the likes of Evan Luard and Stephen Haseler, on the other hand, the challenge was to create a new centre party that would successfully challenge existing pieties while still retaining those aspects of the Labour Party's identity that they continued to hold in high esteem. Once the SDP came closer to becoming a reality, more substantial figures soon entered the arena – but as their loyalties to the past were much more recent, so they often experienced hesitancy and confusion in both a practical and ideological sense. Only the new party's critics within Labour's dwindling band of revisionists seemed unencumbered by any such internal divisions, confidently asserting that the defectors were no longer social-democrats at all but auxiliaries of the Conservative enemy.

Many of these struggles came out into the open once the party came into existence. The exhortation of its leaders to embrace the future and not the past was at odds with the residual hope that the SDP could eclipse Labour by keeping the best of what the latter once had and rejecting what was no longer needed. At first, it was the traditionalist elements of the Labour right that were kept at arm's length, but before long even previously hallowed names

such as Gaitskell and Tawney became identified as beyond the pale. This did not go unnoticed, and party supporters complained at what they saw as the erasure of their political identity, feeling that it had not become as representative of the working class as they had hoped. In particular, the party's new ethos did not do much for its relations with the trade unions. Critics of the unions, like Bill Rodgers, failed to hide their bitterness, which hampered the party's ability to attract any of them into the fold; even the EETPU – led by Frank Chapple, the most sympathetic of the trade union 'barons' – stayed within Labour. As for policy, moves towards reform led to further controversy and a split amongst the party's parliamentary representatives, while the proposals for industrial democracy – an example, perhaps, of the radical new thinking the SDP wished to encourage – merely served to illustrate that the difference in perspectives between capital and labour could not be erased as easily as they had hoped.

## CONCLUSION

As was demonstrated in the first chapter, Labour's right wing was a complex beast. Understood purely in terms of its doctrine, it could easily be characterised as 'revisionist' – the term used to refer to both to members of the right's intellectual élite and their social-democratic philosophy. This revisionism dated back to the teachings of Bernstein, who 'revised' late-nineteenth century Marxism by repudiating its revolutionary content, but revisionism in the Labour Party was a home-grown phenomenon: it drew roots both from the economism and the parliamentarism of the Fabian Society, and the commitment to social reform and Keynesian economic philosophy of the 'New Liberals'. What brought its leading thinkers – Crosland, Evan Durbin, Douglas Jay and others – together was a desire to reconcile socialist thinking with capitalism in the present time, resulting in a philosophy that praised gradual reform, sought to uphold the mixed economy of public and private enterprise, pursued full employment, and embraced high levels of public expenditure in many different realms.

There was, however, an alternative, rather shadowy 'non-revisionist' right which co-existed at the same time as revisionism. Its character is hard to pin down, for it possessed no alternative doctrinal model – indeed, many arch-revisionists, such as John Mackintosh, saw it as a mood rather than something that could be defined. It has been variously described as the 'consolidatory' right or the 'trade union' right, on account of its industrial roots and its ability to act as a centrist fulcrum within the party, but neither of these epithets really does it justice – this element of the right was in fact not purely trade unionist, nor was it so apolitical as to sit equally apart from the right and left; indeed, until the 1970s it was viewed as essentially supportive of the revisionist programme. Generally speaking, however, it has been taken to

refer to staunch ‘party men’ such as James Callaghan – the ‘keeper of the cloth cap’, in Peter Jenkins’s phrase – who had come into the Labour movement by means of the workplace rather than any through any explicit intellectual commitment. Their dedication to the party’s virtue – in particular, to its working-class heritage and traditions – led them to become defined in several pejorative ways by leading ideologues on the radical fringes of revisionism, especially among Roy Jenkins’s supporters, who viewed the Lab suspiciously as a reactionary influence on matters relating to Europe and the trade unions in particular.

Beyond the dichotomy of revisionism and traditionalism, there was another important aspect of the Labour right’s ideological character that is also worthy of examination, namely its ethical dimension – the shared understanding of moral values and their connection to progressive ideals. Revisionism’s ethical substance ensured that it would never be just a doctrinal programme for material reforms; had that been so, then it would never have acquired widespread appeal within the party. The three ethical aspects that informed the revisionist right’s understanding were equality, reason and freedom or liberty. Equality was frequently expressed – especially by Anthony Crosland – in social as well as economic terms, with a focus on the need to eliminate class privilege, and was commonly viewed as the principal objective for any nominally ‘social-democratic’ society. Reason, which was central to Hugh Gaitskell’s leadership, was the process by which revisionists objectively understood social reality, fostering a disposition that prized gradual, evidence-based policy rather than dogmatic theorising. And then there was freedom, which Evan Durbin enshrined as a respect for British parliamentary democracy, but which was also concerned with liberty – enabling the individual to act as a free citizen, supported rather than restricted by the state. The traditionalist element of the right’s consciousness did not demur on any of these, but their emphases were somewhat different: on equality, working-class rights were highlighted rather than arguments for a negation of class difference; on freedom, collective liberties were valued

as much as individual ones; and when it came to reason, the traditionalist ethos involved a keen awareness of the past, and an unwillingness to erase the movement's shared history in favour of simply 'keeping up with the times'.

As Labour entered the 1970s, differences over these three ethics helped to choreograph the internal dissension that led to the right losing much of the influence on the party that it had enjoyed hitherto, and the purpose of the four central chapters of this thesis was to analyse what the main factors were in causing these divisions. The first major development to challenge the right's sense of unity was Europe. Hugh Gaitskell's stance opposing EEC membership in 1962 had left a major impression among his supporters on the right, who divided into 'pro' and 'anti' groupings. By 1971, when a third attempt to enter the EEC was being debated by parliament and in wider political circles, those 'Gaitskellites' who had deviated from their leader's position by supporting entry had become a significant minority on the Labour right, earning them a great deal of opprobrium from 'antis' on both the right and left. There were two ethical principles under consideration during arguments over entry. The first was equality, but only when understood through the prism of populism. Populist arguments found support among the 'antis', even those on the right, because they seemed to channel the traditional attitude to class relations, which was to advance working-class exceptionalism rather than articulate any sense of 'classlessness'; this often manifested itself as anti-élitism, with the pro-Marketeers frequently stereotyped as bourgeois liberals who did not understand popular hostility to the EEC because they were impervious to class sentiment. The second ethic was the belief amongst both pro- and anti-EEC moderates that the other side lacked reason and was therefore in denial about the 'reality' of Britain's present position. Whereas the pro-EEC faction was appalled by what it viewed as the retreat by the anti-Marketeers into nationalist delusions, the 'antis' in turn were irritated by the visionary

and modernist dialectics of several of Labour's 'pros', which to them were little more than an unthinking celebration of 'Europe' as a panacea for the nation's problems.

Another defining issue to threaten the right's sense of harmony was the activity of the trade unions. By the late 1960s, waves of industrial unrest and wage pressures had radicalised the trade union movement, to the extent that many of its newer leaders – such as Jack Jones and Frank Cousins – were associated with the trade union left rather than the previously hegemonic right. This led to attempts to control the undesirable effects of such activity, by enacting an incomes policy which would ensure that all collective bargaining procedures would come under statutory control. Incomes policy appealed to the revisionist right, as it satisfied their desire to have industrial activity controlled on rational grounds, in the sense that it would allow for the planning of wage bargaining rather than the inchoate system that had gone before – thus cohering with their understanding of what socialism should be. Unfortunately for them, the alternative reasoning of many trade unionists – and their supporters in the PLP – was that they should always have the freedom to bargain on behalf of their members for better pay, which led to massed opposition against any state-imposed sanctions. Freedom was thus the second ethic that intervened in the trade union debate. Worries about freedom affected not just the 'traditionalist' supporters of the unions, however, but also many of their opponents, and when the social contract was introduced it was rejected by these social-democrats on the basis that it hindered the ability of governments to rule in the national interest without constraint by union 'barons'. Additionally, there were several other, somewhat unorthodox revisionists who concentrated on trying to 'free' the worker instead, and it was their enthusiasm for industrial democracy – of an employee's right to participate in management decision-making – that challenged their fellow social-democrats in government who were less keen on it.

Chapter four considered the rivalry that developed between Crosland and Roy Jenkins, two men of great promise who had broken through the party ranks in the 1960s, and the new conceptions of revisionism that filled the void once their relationship had broken down. One of the main legacies of the controversy surrounding Europe was that it was Jenkins who acquired a considerable following, despite the fact that Crosland was still regarded as the party's leading social-democratic intellectual. Indeed, the Jenkinsites did not look too kindly on Crosland's role in that debate, given his notorious ambivalence towards membership, and even after it was over their mutual animosity helped deepen an already existing fracture in the parliamentary party's right-wing coalition. Much of this was down to Crosland's continuing sympathy for the traditional elements of the Labour movement, and his desire for unity in the party even if it meant offending his fellow revisionists. But it was in terms of ethical principles that the real difference in emphasis could be seen. Crosland insisted that equality should continue to be the fundamental goal of social-democracy, while Jenkins preferred to focus on themes that emphasised values such as pluralism, idealism and individual autonomy. The latter, however, was not an intellectual in the sense that Crosland was, and it was left to his younger followers to explore what his ideas might mean. Their answers involved reintroducing the ethic of freedom into the revisionist vocabulary, but these did not always tally with each other: whereas Giles Radice envisaged a moderate 'community socialism' that would enable ordinary people to take decisions for themselves, Evan Luard had a more radical attitude to decentralisation that was influenced by radical socialist philosophers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As for John Mackintosh, his critique was much more focused on identifying economic problems, such as the stifling atmosphere that he believed was inhibiting free enterprise, than on providing new ideas which could rectify them.

While this new 'liberal' revisionist identity was gradually being built, there existed another group of right-wingers who were on a very different path. Crosland's anti-élitist turn in the early 1970s may have been disdained by the Jenkinsites, but for a young academic called Stephen Haseler it was the lifeblood of the Labour Party's electoral appeal. First coming to prominence in British politics as a vitriolic anti-Marketeer, Haseler constructed a new paradigm for going 'beyond revisionism'. Unlike contemporary theorists such as Barry Hindess and Frank Parkin, Haseler did not agree that Labour was destined to become dominated by middle-class radicals, arguing that the 'Labourist-populism' of people like himself must prevail if the party was to remain representative of working-class opinion. Although sitting on the margins of Labour politics Haseler continued to strive for influence, establishing the SDA in 1975 as way to advance his agenda. The SDA was adept at provoking discontent among the right as well as the left of the party, especially after it befriended an increasingly irate Reg Prentice in the days before he defected to the Conservatives; indeed, its leading figures then underwent a 'right turn' themselves, with Haseler covertly advising Margaret Thatcher's office as the 1979 general election approached. Yet throughout his wayward political journey Haseler remained loyal to two ethics in particular. The first was equality, but from an essentially 'traditionalist' point of view, which aimed for the erasure of class distinctions but did so by loudly championing the dignity of the working class and their primacy over all other groups. The second was freedom, which Haseler argued for as part of his populist critique, maintaining that rebalancing social-democracy in favour of liberty was desirable because it was in tune with the increasingly unrepresented consensus of working-class opinion. Interestingly, the ethic that he rejected was reason, which he felt gave power and control to technocratic élites and experts.

What were the significance of these issues, and the ethical dilemmas they caused, for the Labour right's sense of self? One clear outcome was that the solid identity enjoyed by the revisionist right during the Gaitskell years, when doctrine seemed to synchronise effortlessly with self-image, had deteriorated to the extent that many who considered themselves 'revisionists' now failed to agree with each other on fundamental issues. Instead, individuals and groups often emphasised different ethics when engaging in debate, thereby unavoidably coming into conflict with each other. The most notable example of this is the aforementioned tension that existed between Crosland's continuing belief in equality as the main focus of revisionism (and, indeed, socialism) and the libertarian perspective of Roy Jenkins and his associates, but there were also other occasions when revisionists appealed to the same ethics but did so in starkly different terms, therefore unavoidably coming to different conclusions. When the right split over the EEC, for example, revisionists fell into opposing camps, with most of them believing in the underlying 'rationality' of their case while remaining convinced of the 'irrationality' of that employed by their opponents. This ensured that when disillusion reached its peak later on, and a realignment of the social-democratic left was first considered, all too often the malcontents (especially certain Jenkinsites) found themselves infuriated by those they had once considered to be their revisionist brethren, without seeking to understand their perspectives.

Additionally, beyond revisionists and revisionism there is that 'other' element of the Labour right – 'traditionalism'. Its characterisation as a loyal facet of the party, appealing mainly to its working-class core, is not without truth, but even this somewhat nebulous group did not remain untouched by the ructions of the 1970s. Many of those on the right who were committed to upholding the values of the movement, such as Callaghan, could act as a block on revisionists' reforms if they so wished: it was their hostility to attempts at reforming the trade unions' collective bargaining rights, for instance, that led to the demise of plans for

statutory incomes policy. But some supposed traditionalists did not fit the mould cast for them, supporting EEC entry for many of the same reasons as the Jenkinsite revisionists did (upholding the Community as a custodian of equality and socialist values, for example), and in some instances even displaying reservations about the institutional connection that existed between the party and the unions, despite the fact that such a connection was the foundation of the Labour movement. This also worked in reverse too, with many revisionists cleaving to a traditionalist conception of the party even as others were in revolt: Crosland's high regard for the apolitical 'centre' of the party and alliance with Callaghan in 1976 are the most obvious examples of this, but so too were the 'loyal' reflexes of many Jenkinsites – such as Phillip Whitehead – who looked on glumly as Jenkins gradually removed himself from the party's mainstream.

But what about the populist element of the Labour right, which was explored in chapter five – into which of the two categories do its adherents fit? It would be simple to view Labour's populism as merely symptomatic of the 'proletarian' upsurge in the early 1970s that revisionists like Mackintosh associated with the traditionalist centre of the movement, which disdained intellectualism and would always back the worker when in conflict with the ruling class. To an extent this is true: the populist hostility to élites, after all, was indicative of their attitude towards equality, which accorded with the historic perceptions of class relations then still prevalent in the movement. But although its ethos may have initially reflected the traditionalist worldview, what distinguished populism from traditionalism was that its leading advocates were revisionist intellectuals. Crosland was perhaps the most notable early exponent, but it was Haseler – influenced by his own understanding of Gaitskellism – who converted it into an actual body of principles. Unlike Crosland, he had a fresh appetite for new ideas, and was dissatisfied by what he saw as the lack of innovation coming from elsewhere on the Labour right – leaving him far removed

from the unintellectual reflexes of stereotypical traditionalism. Therefore, the populism that emerged in the 1970s should be seen not only as fusion of elements of both revisionism and traditionalism, but as a force separate from either – not least because its subsequent trajectory led many of its adherents to flirt with the radical Conservative right.

Lastly, this thesis has argued that efforts by several revisionists to form a breakaway party, the SDP, as a means of ridding themselves of the problems they faced when in the Labour Party, ultimately proved ineffective. This was in part due to the fact that the new party had been a long time in the making, attracting the interest of several different people from all sections of the Labour right, and when these strands were drawn together it was clear there were differences among them about what it should aim to be. Some wanted it to be an expression of radical politics that would draw together dissatisfied liberals and centrists from all parties and none, while others hoped it would recapture the best of the Labour right, often invoking the unity and sense of purpose that had thrived in the days of Attlee and Gaitskell. Both of these elements were involved in the party's foundation, and the 'Gang of Three' that joined Jenkins to form its collective leadership were, in the very early days, torn between these two fundamentally contrasting positions. But as the SDP developed there emerged a sense of *modernity* or novelty that became its overriding ethos. It was this desire to be 'new' that frustrated any possibility of reviving Labour Party revisionism, leading to conflict inside the party from those who did not regard all of their former associations as necessarily bad. Such experiences demonstrated that it was more difficult to escape the Labour movement and its history than had initially been realised.

What implications does this thesis have for further research? One issue to ponder is that the tensions inherent within social-democracy not only continued long after the party schism of 1981, but were accompanied by further divisions over time and the creation of new associations and alliances. Thus, the election of David Owen as leader of the SDP in 1983,

for example, can be seen as representing the triumph of a self-consciously ‘new’ form of populist social-democracy that was far removed both from Crosland’s overtly Labourist populism in the 1970s and from Jenkinsite notions of the ‘radical centre’. As Dean Blackburn explains, Owen’s vision after 1983 – having jettisoned his earlier ‘socialist’ baggage – became much more clearly weighted towards equality of opportunity than equality of outcome, with an enthusiasm for ‘incentive, enterprise and competition’ that was in obvious sympathy with the Thatcherite restructuring of the British economy.<sup>848</sup> Roy Jenkins and his supporters, in contrast, continued their gravitation towards an eventual alliance with the Liberals, but there were some within that milieu who voyaged even further away from their traditional social-democratic moorings – most notably David Marquand, whose interest in constitutional issues eventually placed him alongside the New Left thinkers Ralph Miliband and Anthony Barnett, as demonstrated by their shared endorsement of the electoral reform pressure group ‘Charter 88’.<sup>849</sup> Marquand’s alliance with the radical left, which can also be seen in his adoption of Labourism as a theoretical tool (as explained in chapter one) and growing regard for the ‘decentralist democratic republicanism’ of Tony Benn, is therefore just one indicator of the unexpected directions that certain ‘post-revisionists’ could take.<sup>850</sup>

Beyond the SDP, the legacy of revisionist fragmentation also invites further examination into how the Labour Party restructured itself after the split. As explained in chapter six, the departure of so many social-democrats transformed the balance of forces within the Labour right out of all recognition: those who stayed had little choice but to ally with the anti-left ‘centre’ of the party, forming new alliances and pressure groups such as the Labour Solidarity Campaign and Labour First to regain control. Their watchwords were

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<sup>848</sup> Dean Blackburn, ‘Facing the Future? David Owen and Social Democracy in the 1980s and Beyond’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 64:4 (2011), pp. 644, 648.

<sup>849</sup> Stuart White and Martin O’Neill, ‘That was the New Labour that wasn’t’, *Fabian Review*, 125:1 (2013), pp. 15-6.

<sup>850</sup> David Marquand, *Britain since 1918: The Strange Career of British Democracy* (London, 2008), pp. xii, 265-6.

solidarity and loyalty, but they seemingly failed to re-establish the intellectual dominance that their Gaitskellite predecessors had enjoyed; instead, it was younger members of the so-called 'soft left' who were at the forefront of leading Labour out of its slough of despond, engaging with market liberalism in a manner that staunch old-style revisionists such as David Lipsey and Douglas Jay (both of whom saw the Thatcher Government's economic policies as a recurrence of past delusions<sup>851</sup>) could not manage. However, there were some figures on the 'old' right, such as Roy Hattersley and Austin Mitchell, who also tried to contribute to the party's philosophical renewal, indicating that revisionists may possibly have had a role (however marginal) in the evolving politics of the New Labour era even as revisionism itself fell by the wayside. If so, then the continuities between the social-democratic politics of 'post-war consensus' and that of Thatcherite neo-liberalism may be a fruitful topic for further investigation, which in turn may enhance perceptions of how the Blairite 'revolution' came into being.

And finally, while the overall objective of this thesis has been to document the gradual breakdown of the unity once enjoyed by the Labour right, some of the issues that it raises – most notably the importance of ethical dimensions in the understanding of party philosophy – continue to leave unanswered questions. The schema that I employed identified three particular ethics, and while equality, liberty and reason all clearly have their place when understanding the post-war Labour right, there are no doubt others which also deserve investigation. A recent collection of essays that has attempted to explore the role of ethos in the Labour Party's political thought – *Voices of the UK Left* (2017), edited by Jodi Atkins and John Gaffney – gives an insight into how this can perhaps be done, with essays focusing on the rhetoric of party leaders and the moral arguments for social security reform that were

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<sup>851</sup> See Lipsey, 'Crosland's Socialism', p. 31; CAC, PJAY, 4/4/20 – Letters: Douglas Jay to Peter Jay, 28 October 1979, 17 November 1979.

advanced during Ed Miliband's leadership of the party.<sup>852</sup> With these examples in mind, it is to be hoped that future research into the party's history will continue to attempt an understanding of its ideological development on an ethical as well as a doctrinal plane.

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<sup>852</sup> Jodi Atkins and John Gaffney (eds), *Voices of the UK Left: Rhetoric, Ideology and the Performance of Politics* (Basingstoke, 2017).

## APPENDIX I

**Names of the 69 Labour ‘rebels’ who  
voted for the European Communities  
Bill, 28 October 1971**

- ABSE, Leo (Pontypool)\*  
 ALBU, Austen (Edmonton)\*£#†  
 ARCHER, Peter (Rowley Regis & Tipton)\*  
 BARNES, Michael (Brentford & Chiswick)\*†  
 BARNETT, Joel (Heywood & Royton)\*  
 BLENKINSOP, Arthur (South Shields)\*\*\*  
 BRADLEY, Thomas (Leicester North-East)\*£#†  
 BUCHANAN, Richard (Glasgow Springburn)\*£  
 CORBET, Freda (Camberwell North-East)\*  
 CRAWSHAW, Richard (Liverpool Toxteth)\*\*\*†  
 CRONIN, Dr. John (Loughborough)\*\*\*#  
 DALYELL, Tam (West Lothian)\*#  
 DAVIES, Ifor (Gower)  
 DE FREITAS, Geoffrey (Kettering)\*#  
 DELL, Edmund (Birkenhead)\*£†  
 DOUGLAS, Richard (Clackmannan & Stirlingshire East)\*£  
 DUNNETT, Jack (Nottingham Central)\*  
 EDELMAN, Maurice (Coventry North)\*  
 EDWARDS, William (Merionethshire)\*†  
 ELLIS, R. Thomas (Wrexham)\*†  
 FAULDS, Andrew (Smethwick)\*\*  
 FOLEY, Maurice (West Bromwich)\*£  
 FORD, Benjamin (Bradford North)\*£†  
 GINSBURG, David (Dewsbury)\*#†  
 GORDON WALKER, Patrick (Leyton)\*  
 GUNTER, Raymond (Southwark)\*£  
 HANNAN, William (Glasgow Maryhill)\*#†  
 HATTERSLEY, Roy (Birmingham Sparkbrook)\*  
 HOUGHTON, Douglas (Sowerby)\*\*\*  
 HOWELL, Denis (Birmingham Small Heath)\*£#  
 JENKINS, Roy (Birmingham Stechford)\*#†  
 JOHNSON, Carol (Lewisham South)\*  
 LAWSON, George (Motherwell)\*\*\*  
 LEONARD, Dick (Romford)\*†  
 LEVER, Harold (Manchester Cheetham)\*  
 LOMAS, Kenneth (Huddersfield West)£  
 LYON, Alexander (York)\*  
 LYONS, Edward (Bradford East)\*†  
 MABON, Dr. J. Dickson (Greenock)\*£†  
 MACKIE, John (Enfield East)  
 MACKINTOSH, John P., (Berwick & East Lothian)\*  
 MACLENNAN, Robert (Caithness & Sutherland)\*†  
 MALLALIEU, E. ‘Lance’, (Brigg)\*#  
 MARQUAND, David (Ashfield)\*†  
 MASON, Roy (Barnsley)\*£#  
 MAYHEW, Christopher (Woolwich East)\*  
 ORAM, Albert (East Ham South)  
 OWEN, Dr. David (Plymouth Sutton)\*†  
 PALMER, Arthur (Bristol Central)\*£  
 PANNELL, T. Charles (Leeds West)\*£  
 PRICE, William (Rugby)  
 RANKIN, John (Glasgow Govan)\*£  
 RICHARD, Ivor (Barons Court)\*  
 RODGERS, William (Stockton-on-Tees)\*£#†  
 ROPER, John (Farnworth)\*£†  
 ROSE, Paul (Manchester Blackley)\*†  
 SANDELSON, Neville (Hayes & Harlington)\*\*\*†  
 SHELDON, Robert (Ashton-under-Lyne)\*  
 SILKIN, Samuel (Dulwich)\*  
 SMITH, John (Lanarkshire North)\*  
 STEWART, Michael (Fulham)\*  
 STRAUSS, George (Vauxhall)\*#  
 TAVERNE, Dick (Lincoln)\*#†  
 THOMSON, George (Dundee East)\*†  
 TOMNEY, Frank (Hammersmith

North)\*\*£#  
 WELLS, William (Walsall North)\*†  
 WHITEHEAD, Phillip (Derby North)\*\*  
 WILLEY, Frederick (Sunderland  
 North)\*\*£  
 WILLIAMS, Shirley (Hitchin)\*†

*Number aged 60 or over:* 20 (29%)

*Number sponsored by a trade union:* 14  
 (20%)

*Number sponsored by the Co-operative  
 Society:* 4 (6%)

*Number who defected to the SDP in 1981:*  
 25 (36%)

### KEY

On Europe:

\* Members of the Labour Committee for Europe who signed the pro-European statement, published in the *Guardian*, 11 May 1971.

\*\* Members of the Labour Committee for Europe who did *not* sign the *Guardian* statement.

\*\*\* MPs who were *not* members of the LCE in May 1971 but who did sign the *Guardian* statement.

+ MPs who signed an anti-Market letter addressed to Roy Jenkins and published in the *Times*, 27 October 1971.

On Trade Unions:

£ MPs sponsored by either a trade union or the Co-operative Society at the General Election, 1970.

Right-wing affiliation:

# MPs identified as members of the Campaign for Democratic Socialism, 1961-2.

† MPs who joined the Social Democratic Party (SDP) after 1981

### Sources:

Stephen Haseler, *The Gaitskellites: Revisionism in the British Labour Party, 1951-64* (London, 1969); *Labour Party Annual Conference Report 1970* (London, 1970); The Times, *Times Guide to the House of Commons 1970* (London, 1970); *Europe Left*, 2:3 (May 1971); *Guardian*, 11 May and 30 October 1971; *Times*, 27 October 1971 and 20 November 1971; *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Volume 823, cols. 2212-7, 28 October 1971; Andrew Roth and Janice Kerbey, *The M.P.s' Chart and M.P.s' Gallery* (London, 1971), and with Judy Tench, *The M.P.s' Chart* (London, 1975); Michael Stenton and Stephen Lees, *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament: Volume IV, 1945-1979* (Brighton, 1981); Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford, 1995)

## APPENDIX II

### Members of the Manifesto Group, 1975 (as originally numbered)

- |                        |                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. MABON, Dickson      | 40. BAGIER, Gordon        |
| 2. STEWART, Michael    | 41. BOYDEN, James         |
| 3. WELLBELOVED, James  | 42. DE FREITAS, Geoffrey  |
| 4. URWIN, Tom          | 43. FITCH, Alan           |
| 5. HORAM, John         | 44. GINSBURG, David       |
| 6. CUNNINGHAM, George  | 45. WOODALL, Alec         |
| 7. DUFFY, Pat          | 46. HARDY, Peter          |
| 8. MARQUAND, David     | 47. IRVING, Sydney        |
| 9. GOLDING, John       | 48. O'HALLORAN, Michael   |
| 10. FORD, Ben          | 49. GRAHAM, Ted           |
| 11. WILLEY, Frederick  | 50. PARKER, John          |
| 12. TINN, James        | 51. LAMBOURN, Harry       |
| 13. WALDEN, Brian      | 52. CANT, R. B.           |
| 14. SANDELSON, Neville | 53. OGDEN, Eric           |
| 15. WHITEHEAD, Phillip | 54. CARTWRIGHT, John      |
| 16. ROPER, John        | 55. BRADLEY, Tom          |
| 17. PALMER, Arthur     | 56. PERRY, Ernest         |
| 18. WRIGGLESWORTH, Ian | 57. LYONS, Edward         |
| 19. THOMAS, Mike       | 58. DAVIES, Ifor          |
| 20. MOONMAN, Eric      | 59. JACKSON, Colin        |
| 21. MITCHELL, Bob      | 60. GOURLAY, Harry        |
| 22. BROWN, Ron         | 61. HUGHES, Mark          |
| 23. RADICE, Giles      | 62. DALYELL, Tam          |
| 24. WILLIAMS, Alan Lee | 63. JANNER, Grenville     |
| 25. FAULDS, Andrew     | 64. TOMNEY, Frank         |
| 26. MARKS, Kenneth     | 65. MacFARQUHAR, Roderick |
| 27. COHEN, Stanley     | 66. DOUGLAS-MANN, Bruce   |
| 28. TOMLINSON, John    |                           |
| 29. BUCHANAN, Richard  |                           |
| 30. ELLIS, Tom         |                           |
| 31. MACKINTOSH, John   |                           |
| 32. HAMILTON, William  |                           |
| 33. DOIG, Peter        |                           |
| 34. CRONIN, J. D.      |                           |
| 35. CONLAN, Bernard    |                           |
| 36. STRAUSS, George    |                           |
| 37. ASHLEY, Jack       |                           |
| 38. DUNNETT, Jack      |                           |
| 39. CRAWSHAW, Richard  |                           |

#### Source:

British Library of Political and Economic  
Science, London School of Economics,  
Neville Sandelson papers, 6/1

## APPENDIX III

### Abstract

The doctoral thesis is a study of the changing political identities that emerged among the Labour party's social-democratic 'right' wing in the 1970s, and the cultural and intellectual forces that shaped them. The divisions that formed within the Labour right have often been portrayed as the beginnings of a permanent schism between intellectual middle-class 'revisionists' on the one hand and populist working-class 'traditionalists' on the other. The main aim of the thesis is to question just how valid such a dichotomy this is, and whether or not the manner in which many of the participant actors viewed both themselves and their opponents is justified.

The thesis is composed of six chapters. The opening chapter focuses on the historiography that underpins existing studies of the Labour right, and the various definitions that have been employed by historians and political scientists to categorise the differences that emerged from within its ranks. This is then followed by an analysis of the debates surrounding Britain's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1971: I argue that the arguments over EEC membership caused the right to dissolve into opposing 'populist' and 'elitist' camps (to use the discourse that was common at the time) that transcended the existing divides between revisionism and traditionalism, and further contend that 'Europe' was the initial trigger for subsequent fragmentation in the party, prompting many right-wingers to reappraise the assumptions that had previously governed their thinking.

The third chapter is a discussion of how the historic link between the Labour Party and the trade unions fractured amid deteriorating industrial relations, and the various efforts that

emerged from within the Labour right in the late 1970s to establish a new concordat that would revive it, while the fourth chapter examines the schism that developed between supporters of Roy Jenkins and Anthony Crosland – two leading revisionists with radically different ideas of how to rejuvenate their doctrine – and the consequences this had for intra-party unity; it also takes a closer look at the new ideas that emerged from the supporters of both men towards the end of the decade.

The fifth chapter examines how the decline of the revisionists' intellectual hegemony created a void that was soon occupied by the radical, Right-wing Conservative politics espoused by Margaret Thatcher. The final chapter, meanwhile, analyses how elements of the Labour right metamorphosed into a new political party, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), in 1981.

Although envisaged as a project for revisionists who wished to leave the atavistic, 'traditional', class-based ideology of Labour behind, I conclude that the lingering attachment to the 'movement' felt by many Social Democrats prevented them from being able to build such a party in this way.

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- (uncategorised) Labour Common Market Safeguards Committee papers
- BEE: Colin Beever papers
- CAN: David Candler papers

- Hayter: Dianne Hayter papers
- MANIF: Manifesto Group papers
- NEC: Papers of the National Executive Committee

#### University of Cambridge

##### *Churchill College Archive (CAC):*

- ALBU: Austen Albu papers
- PJAY: Peter Jay papers
- TADA: Tam Dalyell papers
- THCR: Margaret Thatcher papers
- YUNG: Michael Young papers

#### University of Essex

##### *Albert Sloman Library, Special Collections (SLO):*

- ROD: Papers of William Rodgers
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