The British New Right and the Problem of Public Opinion, c.1965-1987

Charles Edward Lockwood

Selwyn College, University of Cambridge

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Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Name: Charles Edward Lockwood

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Summary: *This thesis is the history of how a selection of influential individuals, who can loosely be described as belonging to a 'New Right', identified and sought to tackle a particular problem in politics: how to mould public opinion such that it would support ideas and policies that ran counter to conventional wisdom. The five chapters of the thesis will examine stages in the development and evolution of this project. They will delineate how a generation of New Right thinkers sought to rework prevailing assumptions within the Conservative Party regarding the relationship between ideas and the people. Convinced that, under Edward Heath's leadership, the Conservative Party's activities had become constrained by a hostile climate of public opinion, they resolved to change the terms of British political debate. The culmination of these efforts, John Hoskyns and Norman Strauss's 'Stepping Stones' project, constituted an ambitious and systematic effort to transform voters' 'Mental Sets'. While they had some success initially in converting the party to their perspective, ultimately they were marginalized by changes in political circumstances, which weakened the persuasive force of their arguments. Ideas that had seemed urgent and radical in the 1970s came to seem outdated by the mid-1980s. Concurrently, alternative conceptions of public opinion, deriving from public choice economics and political marketing, grew in influence. In tracing these evolving conceptions of public opinion within the Conservative Party, this thesis will disrupt established notions of a unitary, consistent politics of 'Thatcherism'.*

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List of Abbreviations

ACP	Advisory Committee on Policy
ASI	Adam Smith Institute
BMRB	British Market Research Bureau
BT	British Telecom
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CCCC	Cross-Cultural Consumer Categorization
CPA	Conservative Party Archive
CPC	Conservative Political Centre
CPG	Conservative Philosophy Group
CPRS	Central Policy Review Staff
CPS	Centre for Policy Studies
CRD	Conservative Research Department
CSRC	Conservative Systems Research Centre
ECSG	Enterprise Culture Study Group
EHP	Papers of Sir Edward Heath
ERM	Exchange Rate Mechanism
ESOP	Employee Stock Ownership Plan
GLC	Greater London Council
HP	Papers of Sir John Hoskyns
IEA	Institute for Economic Affairs
KJ	Papers of Sir Keith Joseph
LP	Papers of Nigel Lawson (Lord Lawson of Blaby)
LSE	London School of Economics
MTFS	Medium Term Financial Strategy
MTFW	Margaret Thatcher Foundation Website

NCB	National Coal Board
NEDC	National Economic Development Council
NPM	New Public Management
NTBG	No Turning Back Group
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
ORC	Opinion Research Corporation
PEB	Party Election Broadcast
PEST	Pressure for Social and Economic Toryism
PINS	Political Information System
PP	Papers of John Enoch Powell
PPB	Party Political Broadcast
PPS	Parliamentary Private Secretary
PR	Public Relations
PSBR	Public Sector Borrowing Requirement
SDP	Social Democratic Party
TP	Papers of Baroness Thatcher
TPP	Papers of Terence Price
TUC	Trades Union Congress
VALS	Values and Lifestyles
WP	Papers of Michael Wolff
WSOC	Wider Share Ownership Council

Introduction

The economic situation is not an independent variable; it reflects the state of political life, the degree to which people are aware of realities, and the climate of opinion. You will only have a healthy economy in a sound body politic.[1]

History is made by people: its movement depends on small currents as well as great tides, on ideas, perceptions, will and courage, the ability to sense a trend, the will to act on understanding and intuition. It is up to us to give intellectual content and political direction to these new dissatisfactions…we must convert disillusion into understanding.[2]

These strident affirmations of historical philosophy, by Sir Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher respectively, marked two salvos in the 'battle of ideas' they waged against socialism from the mid-1970s. Although calculated to convey a public impression of intellectual energy and clarity of purpose, these remarks reflected more than just a superficial public relations strategy. In fact, Thatcher and Joseph were the public representatives of a broader intellectual movement within Conservative Party circles, which sought to rework prevailing conceptions of the relationship between political leaders and the great mass of the public - between the political and social spheres. Members of this movement - whom I will term the 'New Right' - were convinced that, under Edward Heath's leadership, the Conservative Party's activities had become constrained by a hostile climate of public opinion. The question they posed was whether this prevailing climate was intractable. Could it be altered? If so, how? Would it be possible to establish a climate of public opinion that could support

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[1] Keith Joseph, Speech at Edgbaston, 19 October 1974, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/101830 [hereafter MTFW].
[2] Margaret Thatcher, 'The New Renaissance', Speech to the Zurich Economic Society, 14 March 1977, in Margaret Thatcher, *Let Our Children Grow Tall*, pp.93-101, at p.93.

ideas and policies that ran counter to conventional wisdoms?

For the New Right, the answer was in the affirmative. However, in order to effect such a transformation in the climate of public opinion, they would first need to convert the Conservative Party to their perspective. Subsequently, they would need to devise a strategy to alter public attitudes and then implement it in practice. This thesis traces the development and subsequent fortunes of this political and intellectual project to reshape the climate of public opinion in Britain. In the process, it uncovers how influential Conservative politicians and their advisors reflected consciously on fundamental epistemological questions regarding the nature of public opinion, the role of the politician in a democratic polity, and their relationship with those whom they represented. What was the essential nature of public opinion? How far was it malleable and if so by what means? How much agency did politicians possess in changing public attitudes? How far were they constrained by socio-economic processes outside their control?

Tory Politics and the People

Rumination on the role of the political leader and their relationship with the broader public has been a long-running theme in the history of the Conservative Party.[3] Unfortunately, as this brief historiographical review will demonstrate, only a minority of those who have written about the Conservative Party have appreciated the centrality of this theme or have brought out its full logic. In this thesis, I wish to partially remedy this oversight by applying such a perspective to a period to which it has yet to be fully applied. Conservatives in the 1970s and 1980s, just like their forebears a century earlier, pondered how they could overcome potential social or structural obstacles to an electoral majority, shaping public opinion in their favour.

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[3] Jonathan Parry, 'The Quest for Leadership in Unionist Politics, 1886-1956', *Parliamentary History* 12 (1993), pp.296-311; Nigel Fisher, *The Tory Leaders: Their Struggle for Power* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977); Michael Bentley, 'Salisbury and Baldwin' in Maurice Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays* (London: Cassell, 1978), pp.25-40; Stuart Ball, *Portrait of a Party: The Conservative Party in Britain 1918-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.464-72.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Conservative leaders veered between attempts to establish a 'constructive', material appeal to unpropertied electors and a quietist approach, which sought to inoculate voters against the temptations of socialist and utopian panaceas by rhetorical means, establishing a 'spiritual counter atmosphere' that superseded class antagonisms.[4] Philip Williamson has highlighted how Stanley Baldwin employed rhetoric as a means to mould public opinion, engaging in a form of political education through which he sought to reinforce the salutary habits of the public and discourage socialistic and materialistic enthusiasms.[5] Indeed, one might go so far as to say that many Conservatives' central preoccupation was public education, in the sense of binding the mass electorate to the prevailing social authority and (what they deemed to be) moral respectability. This didacticism was less a conservative facsimile of the grassroots educational initiatives of the Labour movement,[6] than an attempt to cultivate a certain reciprocity of feeling between leaders and led. Richard Austen (Rab) Butler's establishment of the Conservative Political Centre at the end of the Second World War marked an attempt to institutionalize this 'two-way movement of ideas', providing channels of communication to ensure that the party leadership remained in touch with grassroots feeling.[7] At no point did Conservative Party leaders assume that they operated in an

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[4] Ibid., p.304. On the former approach, see E. H. H. Green, 'Radical Conservatism: The Electoral Genesis of Tariff Reform, *Historical Journal* 28 (1985), pp.667-92. On the latter, Philip Williamson, 'The Doctrinal Politics of Stanley Baldwin', in Michael Bentley (ed.) *Public and Private Doctrine: Essays in British History Presented to Maurice Cowling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.181-208.

[5] Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999); Williamson, 'The Doctrinal Politics of Stanley Baldwin'.

[6] Although Conservatives did establish some initiatives to mirror left-wing intellectual life in the interwar years. See Clarisse Berthezène, 'Creating Conservative Fabians: The Conservative Party, Political Education and the Founding of Ashridge College', *Past and Present* 182 (2004), pp.211-40; Gary Love, 'The Periodical Press and the Intellectual Culture of Conservatism in Interwar Britain' *Historical Journal* 57 (2014), pp.1027-56.

[7] Philip Norton, 'The Role of the Conservative Political Centre, 1945-98', in Stuart Ball and Ian Holliday (eds), *Mass Conservatism: The Conservatives and the Public since the 1880s* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp.183-200.

entirely autonomous political sphere, unencumbered by any concern for wider public attitudes.

Nevertheless, it is often stated that the Conservatives were content to 'accept the public as they were'.[8] Their acceptance of original sin is said to have engendered an instinctive aversion to moralization and to aspirations to alter the public's habitual behaviour.[9] While this is perhaps an apposite description of the Conservatives of the late-nineteenth century, who opposed the moralizing of Liberal and dissenting 'faddists', it should not be presented as an eternal characteristic of Conservatism. A sanguine attitude *vis-à-vis* the character of the public was, in retrospect, contingent upon the existence of a socially limited (and often deferential) electorate. The advent of a full democracy after the First World War coincided with the erosion of the political consensus within Westminster regarding the limited role of the state and the sanctity of the rights of property. It would be a mistake to assume that Conservatives remained content to rest on their laurels thereafter, uncritically assuming that the public remained 'naturally Conservative'. In fact, as David Jarvis has argued, they often feared precisely the opposite: that there was a latent socialist majority in the electorate at large, ripe for mobilization by redistributive, materialist appeals.[10] This apprehension compelled Conservative leaders to engage more actively in political education. As Geraint Thomas has demonstrated, the defensive culture of grassroots Conservatism began to conflict with the party's national agenda during the inter-war years. While local activists often remained preoccupied with material concerns, such as food prices and the burden of the rates, the party's national leaders increasingly

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[8] Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.265. Lawrence describes how opposition to the 'faddist' moral agenda of Liberals defined popular Toryism in Edwardian Wolverhampton.

[9] Anthony Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection: The Religious and Secular Traditions of Conservative Thought from Hooker to Oakeshott* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), pp.12-13.

[10] David Jarvis, 'The Shaping of Conservative Electoral Hegemony, 1918-39', in Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor (eds), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1997), pp.131-52. See also Jon Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.120-1.

sought to mould, rather than accommodate, public opinion, diverting it away from material concerns.[11]

Even when Conservatives were successful in mobilizing popular support in a mass democracy, they did not necessarily assume that such behaviour was congenital and would inevitably endure. Indeed, the perennial spectres of socialist agitation and moral degeneration continued to haunt Conservative consciences throughout the twentieth century. Prophesies of impending doom, lamenting the state of Britain as a 'dying country in a dying civilization', abound in the writing of Conservatives during the second half of the century.[12] Indeed, when Margaret Thatcher asserted that Britain was not a 'naturally socialist country', she was not expounding a banal truism; rather, she was trying to convince the British public to come to its senses (and vote Conservative).[13] Given their failure to win four of the five general elections prior to 1979, it seemed to many commentators that the Conservatives had finally ceded their position as the 'natural party of government' to Labour.[14] Hence, in spite of Conservatives' aversion to utopian ideals of improving the public, some form of active public education was necessary to regain popular support and to avert, as they saw it, the danger of the public falling for utopian socialism. Habitual values and behavioural patterns had to be sustained and any trend towards socialism and moral decline had to be reversed. Debates regarding the form this political intervention should take are the subject of this thesis.

Ambivalence *vis-à-vis* the degree to which it was incumbent upon political leaders to accommodate the public as they were and their concurrent desire to mould

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[11] Geraint Thomas, 'Political Modernity and "Government" in the Construction of Inter-War Democracy: Local and National Encounters', in Laura Beers and Geraint Thomas (eds), *Brave New World: Imperial and Democratic Nation-Building in Britain between the Wars* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2011), pp.39-65.

[12] Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone, *The Dilemma of Democracy: Diagnosis and Prescription* (London: Collins, 1979), p.15.

[13] Margaret Thatcher, Conservative Party Election Broadcast, 30 April 1979, MTFW (104055).

[14] Jon Lawrence and Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Margaret Thatcher and the decline of class politics' in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds) *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.132-47; at p.133; Dennis Kavanagh, *Thatcherism and British Politics: The End of Consensus?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.5.

public attitudes was a feature of Conservative as well as left-wing politics.[15] However, these 'dilemmas of representation' have been addressed more thoroughly in the historiography of the Labour movement.[16] The Labour Party's development as the parliamentary wing of a wider popular movement makes a focus on questions of representation more obvious perhaps. Yet it also reflects intellectual trends in labour historiography, whereby historians have questioned deterministic accounts of class politics, instead portraying politicians as active agents in the construction of their electoral constituencies.[17] Jon Lawrence has stressed that 'representation' – in other words the relationship between 'high' and 'popular' politics – is constantly renegotiated.[18] Other historians influenced by the 'New Political History' have sought to reconstruct Labour's conceptions of the public in the later twentieth century. Lawrence Black, for example, has investigated how Labour politicians understood and responded to the social changes connected to 'affluence' in the 1950s.[19] Laura Beers has investigated Labour's techniques of communication with the electorate in the post-war years.[20] Jeremy Nuttall, meanwhile, has focused on attempts by Labour politicians to promote certain qualities of mind amongst the British public.[21] However, these efforts were not always successful. In an influential account, Steven Fielding, Peter Thompson and Nick Tiratsoo argued that Labour's reformism was constrained by a stubbornly individualistic public.[22] In this study of Conservative politics, I hope to pose similar questions regarding the relative autonomy of the political sphere and constraints upon it.

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[15] Jarvis, 'Shaping of Conservative Electoral Hegemony', p.143; Thomas, 'Political Modernity', pp.42, 56.

[16] Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, p.264.

[17] For a summary of these developments, see ibid., chapter 3.

[18] Ibid., p.61.

[19] Lawrence Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951-64: Old Labour, New Britain?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).

[20] Laura Beers, 'Labour's Britain, Fight For It Now!', *Historical Journal* 52 (2009), pp.667-95.

[21] Jeremy Nuttall, *Psychological Socialism: The Labour Party and Qualities of Mind and Character, 1931 to the Present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

[22] Steven Fielding, Peter Thompson and Nick Tiratsoo, *England Arise! The Labour Party and Popular Politics in 1940s England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

However, one should not imply that the reconstruction of political thought-worlds, discourses and electoral perspectives in British history was a novel departure by practitioners of the New Political History. In many respects, the disciples of Gareth Stedman Jones shared the preoccupations of Maurice Cowling and those described retrospectively as the 'high politics' school of history.[23] Both historical 'schools' emerged from a critique of the deterministic assumptions prevalent in the social sciences of the 1960s and 1970s, asserting instead the relative autonomy of the political sphere from material structures.[24] Although the New Political Historians' concern for subaltern 'political culture' might seem a world apart from Cowling's focus on 'fifty or sixty politicians in constant tension with one another', they shared a concern for 'the assumptions that constitute the framework within which teaching, writing and public action are conducted'.[25] This was what Cowling termed 'public doctrine'. In his historical works, Cowling construed political rhetoric not just as an attempt to say what the public wanted to hear, but, more fundamentally, as an effort to 'make electors want them to say what they wanted to say in the first place'.[26] As we shall see, this idea that politicians possessed the formative capacity to alter the terms of political debate proved alluring to the nascent New Right. In fact, Cowling and his associates in the 'Peterhouse School' were themselves active agents in advancing this perspective within Conservative Party circles during the 1970s. There

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[23] Susan Pedersen, 'What is Political History Now?', in David Cannadine (ed.), *What is History Now?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp.36-56, at p.40; David Craig, '"High Politics" and the "New Political History"', *Historical Journal* 53 (2010), pp.453-75; Philip Williamson, 'Maurice Cowling and Modern British Political History', in Robert Crowcroft, S. J. D. Green and R. C. Whiting (eds), *The Philosophy, Politics and Religion of British Democracy: Maurice Cowling and Conservatism* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010), pp.27-41.

[24] The seminal moment of the New Political History is usually taken to have been Gareth Stedman Jones's epiphanic 1982 essay 'Rethinking Chartism', published in his *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.90-178. Cowling's first book was a critique of normative political science: *The Nature and Limits of Political Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

[25] Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour, 1920-1924: The Beginning of Modern British Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p.iii; Maurice Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England: Volume I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.xi.

[26] Cowling, *Impact of Labour*, p.v.

was, therefore, a substantial degree of reflexivity in the New Right's appraisal and attempted manipulation of the public mood. Historians have, hitherto, underappreciated this.

Given their devotion to meticulous archival research as a prerequisite for the reconstruction of how political ideas operated in practice, acolytes of Cowling devoted their attention to much earlier periods of political history than that of this study.[27] Their approach has made, however, a substantial contribution to received interpretations of Conservatism prior to 1945. Perhaps most significantly, Michael Bentley and Philip Williamson's respective studies of Salisbury and Baldwin reconstructed the historical agency of two leaders who have often been portrayed as merely fighting negative rearguard battles against the intractable forces, or 'processes', of democratization and collectivization.[28] Rather than focusing on their governments' legislative records and approach to political economy, Bentley and Williamson uncovered the two leaders' actual preoccupations and 'sense of location' in history.[29] Abstract discussions of the 'mood', 'atmosphere' and 'smell' of Conservatism were, in their minds, not just romantic waffle; they derived from a Cowlingite concern to identify the leaders' 'public doctrine'.[30] This was not simply a passive process of representing, or interpreting a pre-existing public opinion. It was, on the contrary, an active undertaking, which aimed to set the parameters of political debate, employing rhetoric and imagery in order to reconcile the public to

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[27] See for example, John Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1857-68* (London: Constable, 1966); Andrew Jones, *The Politics of Reform,* 1884 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Alistair Cooke and John Vincent, *The Governing Passion: Cabinet Government and Party Politics, 1885-86* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1974); Michael Bentley, *The Liberal Mind, 1914-1929* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[28] Michael Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World: Conservative Environments in Late-Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*. The rehabilitation of these two figures by historians of the 'high politics' school can be traced back to Andrew Jones and Michael Bentley's essay, 'Salisbury and Baldwin' in Maurice Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays* (London: Cassell, 1978), pp.25-40.

[29] Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World*, pp.3-4.

[30] Jones and Bentley, 'Salisbury and Baldwin', p.33; Williamson, 'The Doctrinal Politics of Stanley Baldwin', p.184

Conservative leadership. From Salisbury and Baldwin's perspective, 'public opinion' possessed no *independent* existence anterior to its articulation by those who led public political discussion. As I hope to demonstrate in this thesis, this idealist strand of Conservative thinking should not necessarily be considered as a relic of a bygone age of 'patrician' leadership, obliterated for eternity by the radical individualism of Thatcherite government.[31] My research has led me to see that similar concerns – for the climate of public opinion and the means of reshaping it – preoccupied a significant group of thinkers who contributed to the inception of the New Right, many of whom were anything but patrician.

This strand of thinking has been largely overlooked in the historiography of the post-1945 Conservative Party. Although the leading luminaries of the field have lacked none of the Peterhouse School's empiricism, they have addressed more abstract questions regarding conceptions of public opinion and the intersection between elite and popular political spheres only tangentially. The encyclopaedic volumes of John Ramsden and Stuart Ball are, by all means, prodigious feats of scholarship and this thesis aims to complement their accounts of the Conservative Party's national and grassroots institutions.[32] However, their focus on organizational developments has tended to privilege study of the process of electoral politics over more conceptual questions regarding Conservatives' understanding of their role in a democratic polity.[33] Stuart Ball and Ian Holliday's edited volume on *Mass*

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[31] Jon Lawrence, 'Paternalism, Class, and the British Path to Modernity', in Simon Gunn and James Vernon (eds), *Peculiarities of Liberal Modernity in Imperial Britain* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 2011), pp.147-64, at pp.163-4.

[32] John Ramsden, *The Making of Conservative Party Policy: The Conservative Research Department since 1929* (London: Longman, 1980); John Ramsden, *The Age of Churchill and Eden, 1940-1957* (London: Longman, 1995); John Ramsden, *Winds of Change: Macmillan to Heath, 1957-1975* (London: Longman, 1996); Stuart Ball (ed.), *The Conservative Party since 1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

[33] Conservatives' conceptions of the public in the early years of universal manhood, and later female, suffrage have attracted greater attention. See, for example, Ross McKibbin, 'Class and Conventional Wisdom: The Conservative Party and the "Public" in Inter-War Britain', in Ross McKibbin, *Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.259-93; David Jarvis, 'Mrs Maggs and Betty: The Conservative Appeal to Women Voters in the

Conservatism (2002) attempted to rectify this lacuna, acknowledging that Conservative politicians did not operate in a high political sphere, hermetically sealed from the pressures of wider political culture.[34] For example, Andrew Taylor's contribution pointed to the influence of psephology in altering Conservatives' political strategy from the late-1950s.[35] (The influence of psephology and electoral sociology in altering the prevailing conception of public opinion, especially within the Conservative Research Department, is something I have written about elsewhere and is discussed further in Chapter One.[36]) Yet, the influence of the New Political History appears to have had something of a centrifugal effect on the historiography of the Conservative Party.[37] While many bottom-up studies are highly suggestive snapshots of Britain's changing political culture, they do not cumulatively amount to an explanatory account of how and why the Conservative Party's electoral perspective emerged and evolved.[38] While developments 'on the ground' undoubtedly influenced the actions and perceptions of political elites, the pattern of

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1920s', *Twentieth Century British History* 5 (1994), pp.129-52; Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*; Thomas, 'Political Modernity'.

[34] Ball and Holliday (eds), *Mass Conservatism*. See also Martin Francis and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (eds), *The Conservatives and British Society, 1880-1990* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996).

[35] Andrew Taylor, 'Speaking to Democracy: The Conservative Party and Mass Opinion form the 1920s to the 1950s', in Ball and Holliday (eds), *Mass Conservatism*, pp.58-77. See also Andrew Taylor, '"The Record of the 1950s Is Irrelevant": The Conservative Party, Electoral Strategy and Opinion Research, 1945-64', *Contemporary British History* 17 (2003), pp.81-110.

[36] Charles Lockwood, '"Action Not Words": The Conservative Party, Public Opinion and "Scientific" Politics, c.1945-70', *Twentieth Century British History* (2019), hwz014, https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwz014.

[37] The macro-themes of the decline of deference and rise of popular individualism offer a potential route towards synthesis. See Emily Robinson, Camilla Schofield, Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Natalie Thomlinson, 'Telling Stories about Post-War Britain: Popular Individualism and the "Crisis" of the 1970s', *Twentieth Century British History* 28 (2017), pp.268-304.

[38] Good recent examples include: Chris Moores, 'Thatcher's Troops? Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and the Search for "Ordinary" Thatcherism in 1980s Britain', *Contemporary British History* 31 (2017), pp.230-55; Amy Edwards, '"Financial Consumerism": Citizenship, Consumerism and Capital Ownership in the 1980s', *Contemporary British History* 31 (2017), pp.210-29; Jacob Ward, 'Financing the Information Age: London TeleCity, the Legacy of IT-82, and the Selling of British Telecom', *Twentieth Century British History* 30 (2019), pp.424-46.

causation was not straightforward or unilinear. As this thesis demonstrates, the relationship between the high political sphere and wider society was mediated through the prevailing conceptions of public opinion held by political elites.[39]

Ideologies of Conservatism

The preponderant focus of writing on the Conservative Party has been on the content of the party's ideologies, especially on matters of political economy, rather than on the form and application of Conservative popular appeals. Political scientists and historians of political thought have endeavoured to outline certain essential principles, intellectual genealogies, and philosophies that are said to underlie the Conservative tradition.[40] They have distinguished between 'core' and 'adjacent' concepts, as well as between collectivistic and individualistic 'inheritances'.[41] While these are interesting intellectual exercises, identifying regularities across time, their abstraction of ideas from their contemporary context does not fully convey the instrumental purpose for which they were formulated or adopted. Politicians made recourse to ideas only insofar as they offered practical solutions to the particular exigencies they faced. Thus, compendiums of 'key contributors' to Conservative political thought can give a misleading impression that political actors were contributing to a coherent philosophical canon, rather than intervening in a unique political debate.[42] It is perhaps best to avoid Procrustean intellectual typologies wherever possible. One could follow the example of Emily Jones and recover the constructed and pliable nature of political traditions and intellectual genealogies. For instance, Edmund Burke, as Jones establishes, only became the 'founder of modern

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[39] For reflections on this theme in an earlier context, see James Thompson, *British Political Culture and the Idea of "Public Opinion", 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[40] See, for example, Quinton, *Politics of Imperfection*; W. H. Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition, Volume II: The Ideological Inheritance* (London: Menthen, 1983); Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

[41] Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, pp.329-47; Greenleaf, *British Political Tradition, Volume II*, pp.192-3.

[42] Mark Garnett and Kevin Hickson, *Conservative Thinkers: The Key Contributors to the Political Thought of the Modern Conservative Party* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

conservatism' in the late-nineteenth century as Conservatives and Liberal Unionists employed his ideas instrumentally during the debate surrounding Irish Home Rule.[43] Similar contrivance of intellectual traditions and claims to belong to certain schools of thought was also a notable feature of Conservative politics in the period of this study.

One historian of the Conservative Party who attempted to delineate the 'historical presentation and reception of Conservative ideas' was the late Ewen Green.[44] In contrast to abstract studies of Conservative doctrine and its luminaries, Green uncovered the ideas of obscure, middlebrow thinkers, who were engaged in the constant reassessment of the political dynamics of changing circumstances. This provided a better sense of the networks through which ideas were disseminated and the precise relationship between Conservative parliamentarians, intellectuals and grassroots supporters. Green was able, therefore, to provide a convincing account of how, in the Edwardian era, the 'logic of the situation' seemed to many Conservatives to demand a material appeal to newly enfranchised voters, leading them to embrace Joseph Chamberlain's tariff crusade.[45] Chamberlain's ideas gained pertinence from their ability to explain and offer solutions to the particular electoral exigencies facing the Conservatives at that time. Hence, Green accounted for the *demand* for, as well as the *supply* of, ideas.

However, Green's later work on the origins and practice of 'Thatcherism' was less sensitive to the 'logic of the situation'. His primary interest in ideas about political economy, reinforced by the influence of Peter Clarke, neglected the constitutional and religious aspects of Conservative thought, which were just as, if

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[43] Emily Jones, *Edmund Burke and the Invention of Modern Conservatism, 1830-1914: An Intellectual History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[44] E. H. H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.2.

[45] Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism*, p.2; Green, 'Radical Conservatism'.

not more important.[46] In demonstrating that the supposed post-war 'consensus' was contested within the Conservative Party throughout the post-war decades, Green uncovered a 'Thatcherism *avant la lettre*'.[47] While it is true, of course, that many of the ideas that influenced the Thatcher governments were the product of 'long-standing arguments and trends in the Conservative Party's subculture', there is a danger of lapsing into teleology.[48] In tracing the intellectual genealogies of contrasting attitudes towards political economy, Green came close to presenting Thatcher as a tribune of the lower and middle ranks of the party, who had been marginalized during Macmillan and Heath's periods as leader. In fact, he accorded less importance to 'the formal intellectual base of Thatcherism' than he did to 'the prejudices of the middle and lower ranks of the Conservative Party'.[49] Thatcher's rise is described as reflecting 'a change in the dynamics of the relationship between the party leadership and the conservative constituency', as the predominantly middle-class 'Class of 1959' transformed the parliamentary party.[50] It might well have been true that middle-class supporters were more favourably disposed towards anti-collectivist policies; but this does not necessarily explain why their perspective gained the ascendancy when it did, other than through sheer weight of numbers. One can only conclude that in placing such emphasis on the grassroots origins of 'Thatcherism', Green veered towards a form of social determinism that underplayed the extent to which the strategy of the New Right arose as a response to the particular electoral climate of the period.

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[46] For Clarke's interpretation of Thatcherism, which he characterized as the undoing of a 'Keynesian consensus', see Peter Clarke, 'The Rise and Fall of Thatcherism', *Historical Research* 72 (1999), pp.301-22.

[47] E. H. H. Green, *Thatcher* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2006), p.39. See also E. H. H. Green, 'Thatcherism: An Historical Perspective', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1999), pp.17-42.

[48] Ibid., p.24.

[49] Ibid., p.24,40.

[50] Ibid., p.39.

More recently, historians have begun to 'de-centre' Margaret Thatcher from accounts of Britain's transition to neo-liberalism.[51] This thesis corroborates these accounts, contending that many of the Thatcher governments' neo-liberal policies were developed 'on the hoof' and in response to unforeseen circumstances. Hence, what 'Thatcherism' meant in the context of 1990 was very different to the strategic vision of the New Right in 1975. As Charles Moore's exhaustively researched biographies have demonstrated, contrary to her reputation for ideological dogmatism, Thatcher was a highly pragmatic political operator.[52] In light of this, one must consider the possibility that Thatcher's strident rhetoric was less a display of ideological fervour than a contrived political strategy. The availability of archival material allows us to move beyond the biographical accounts of the past, which fixated on Thatcher's personal story as the 'grocer's daughter'. For all that Thatcher imbibed 'self-evident truths from her father's knee' in Grantham, it is not sufficient to portray the politics of the 1970s and 1980s as the triumph of a sort of *petit-bourgeois* Poujadism.[53] Politics in practice, or what one might term statecraft, is more than just the implementation of an ideological blueprint or of atavistic impulses. Politicians must handle unforeseen exigencies, while simultaneously sustaining the support of a mercurial and evolving electorate. Moreover, they are exposed to a myriad of voices and pressures, whose influence wax and wane as circumstances change.

Consequently, reified definitions of 'Thatcherism', or indeed of 'One Nation Conservatism' or 'Liberal Conservatism', ultimately prove to be chimerical.

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[51] Adrian Williamson, *Conservative Economic Policymaking and the Birth of Thatcherism, 1964-1979* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Aled Davies, *The City of London and Social Democracy: The Political Economy of Finance in Britain, 1959-1979* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Guy Ortolano, *Thatcher's Progress: From Social Democracy to Market Liberalism through an English New Town* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[52] Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography. Volume One: Not for Turning:* (London: Allen Lane, 2013); Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography. Volume Two: Everything She Wants* (London: Allen Lane, 2015); Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography. Volume Three: Herself Alone* (London: Allen Lane, 2019).
[53] Peter Jenkins, *Mrs Thatcher's Revolution: The Ending of the Socialist Era* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987), p.81.

However, the determination of some of Thatcher's advisors to establish a theme of discontinuity in British political discourse, drawing a sharp line between her 'conviction politics' and the 'consensus politics' of her post-war predecessors, has rubbed off on historians and political scientists, many of whom have been determined to define and demarcate the boundaries of Thatcherism. Michael Bentley noted that the 'twin themes of discontinuity and dichotomy' had come to preoccupy scholars of the period.[54] However, dichotomies, such as the 'wet-dry' bifurcation of the early 1980s, must be situated within the particular context and electoral predicaments of the historical moment. Tracing the historical deep structure of such dichotomies not only results in teleology, but it can also obscure the fact that Conservatives were, if anything, divided along multiple axes or dimensions. For instance, although Alfred Sherman and Nigel Lawson are usually considered to have been 'dries' or 'Thatcherites', their political philosophies were, as we shall see, diametrically different. Although they shared an aspiration to reshape public opinion, they differed openly on the most effective means to achieve that. In acknowledging these internecine divides, this thesis correlates with the current historiographical trend, as historians begin to recognize that Thatcherism was not a unitary, consistent phenomenon.[55] Nor, as Ben Jackson has demonstrated, was neo-liberalism.[56] And the two things were certainly not synonymous.

Indeed, the mechanistic language typically associated with Thatcherism – such as talk of 'rolling back the frontiers of the state' – coexisted with an altogether

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[54] Michael Bentley, 'Liberal Toryism in the Twentieth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 4 (1994), pp.177-201, at p.177.

[55] Richard Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London, Simon & Schuster, 2009); Andrew Gamble, 'The Thatcher Myth', *British Politics* 10 (2015), pp.3-15; Aled Davies, 'Pension Funds and the Politics of Ownership in Britain, c.1970-86', *Twentieth Century British History* 30 (2019).

[56] Ben Jackson, 'Currents of Neo-Liberalism: British Political Ideologies and the New Right, c.1955-1979', *English Historical Review* 131 (2016), pp.823-50. On the difficulties of defining neo-liberalism, see Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (eds), *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neo-Liberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), Postface.

different language, particularly in the early years of Thatcher's leadership.[57] For instance, Sir Keith Joseph, in his Edgbaston speech (quoted above) employed the organic language of the 'body politic' and the 'climate of opinion'. Similarly, Thatcher, in her Zurich speech, spoke of 'currents' and 'tides' of feeling. This naturalistic terminology portrayed political change as a continuous, fluid process, guided by intuition, rather than a rational process in which the material boundaries of the state were suddenly revised. Although the language of social unity and 'One Nation' has been associated more commonly with those Conservatives who were uneasy with Thatcher's leadership,[58] the extent to which the New Right also drew upon idealist thought has been underestimated.

Having said that, a number of commentators have detected this ambivalence. Yet, rather than presenting these two languages, or modes of thought, as running parallel, or in competition, they instead refer to the 'contradictions' of a unitary Thatcherism.[59] Indeed, the ends of Thatcher's governments - to uphold social hierarchies, traditional moral values and the unitary sovereignty of the state - could be considered to have been irreconcilable with the means of economic liberalization.[60] Such tensions undoubtedly existed and were widely discussed in Conservative circles at the time. However, if one abandons the assumption that the Thatcher governments operated according to a single internal logic or ideology, then one can consider their record in a radically different light. Behind the scenes, 'Thatcherites' debated the most effective means of reshaping British political culture.

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[57] On this distinction, see Michael Bentley, 'Boundaries in Theoretical Language about the British State', in S. J. D. Green and R. C. Whiting (eds), *The Boundaries of the State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.29-56.

[58] Ian Gilmour, *Dancing with Dogma: Britain under Thatcherism* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Ian Gilmour and Mark Garnett, *Whatever Happened to the Tories: The Conservative Party since 1945* (London: Fourth Estate, 1997).

[59] Andrew Gamble, 'The Contradictions of Thatcherism', *Occasional Paper in Politics and Contemporary History* 22 (Salford: Department of Politics and Contemporary History, University of Salford, 1990); Green, *Thatcher*, pp.50-1.

[60] For this argument, see David Marquand, 'The Twilight of the British State? Henry Dubb versus the Sceptered Awe', in Green and Whiting (eds), *Boundaries of the State*, pp.57-69; John Gray, *The Undoing of Conservatism* (London: Social Market Foundation, 1994); Green, *Thatcher*, pp.50-1.

The transition, over the course of the 1980s, to an increasingly neo-liberal approach should not be presented as the assertion of a fully mature Thatcherite ideology. More accurately, it reflected the growing pre-eminence of one group of thinkers and the concomitant marginalization of others who had been more influential in the early years of Thatcher's leadership. The foundering of a strategy focused on rhetorical exhortation permitted other thinkers, who contended that public behaviour was more effectively shaped through *material* incentives, to assert their claims.

Hence, in concentrating on what Andrew Gamble termed the 'politics of power' – the practical policies undertaken to 'carry on the government' – the existing historiography of the post-1945 Conservative Party has conveyed a partial impression of the party's actual preoccupations.[61] As we shall see, the 'politics of support' - the means of generating mass support for undertaking what they deemed to be the necessary policies to uphold the prevailing politics of power – was, if anything, a greater source of contention within the party. The newness of the New Right was less its approach to the politics of power than its attempt to forge a new politics of support. Indeed, in recent years, some of the more empirically oriented historians have demonstrated that, behind the mythology of 'Thatcherism', policymaking was in reality a circumscribed and pragmatic endeavour.[62] In retrospect, one might contend that adventitious economic circumstances outside of the government's control, following the collapse of the Bretton Woods exchange rate system in the early 1970s, precipitated Britain's transition to 'neo-liberalism'. Moreover, in many respects, Thatcher's leadership marked more of a discontinuity in governing style than in policy. As Adrian Williamson has highlighted, much of the 'Thatcherite' agenda of supply-side reform emerged during Heath's period as leader.[63] In this vein, this thesis contends that internecine divisions within the party

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[61] Andrew Gamble, *The Conservative Nation* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), pp.2, 3-11.
[62] Williamson, *Conservative Economic Policymaking*; Davies, *The City of London and Social Democracy*; Duncan Needham, *UK Monetary Policy from Devaluation to Thatcher, 1967-1982* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
[63] Williamson, *Conservative Economic Policymaking*.

reflected disagreements on the best means of generating and upholding electoral support to a greater extent than theoretical disputes about economic policy. The party's vision for the economy was less contentious than the means of generating support for it. In light of this (and the amount already written on the minutiae of economic policy), it seems appropriate to focus greater attention on the 'politics of support'.

Reshaping British Politics

This thesis is the history of how a selection of influential individuals, who can loosely be described as belonging to a 'New Right', identified and sought to tackle a particular problem in politics: how to mould public opinion such that it would support ideas and policies that ran counter to conventional wisdom. The following five chapters examine stages in the development and evolution of this project. They delineate how a generation of New Right thinkers sought to rework prevailing assumptions regarding the relationship between ideas and the people. While they had some success initially in converting the Conservative Party to their perspective, ultimately they were marginalized by changes in political circumstances, which weakened the persuasive force of their arguments. Ideas that had seemed urgent and radical in the 1970s came to seem outdated by the mid-1980s. Concurrently, alternative conceptions of public opinion, deriving from public choice economics and political marketing, grew in influence. In truth, far from exuding ideological certainty, the Thatcher governments' 'politics of support' were marked by discontinuities and contestation.

Rather than attempting to write the comprehensive history of a particular group or movement called the 'New Right', this thesis focuses on uncovering and contextualizing their intellectual debates about the nature of public opinion. In other words, the thesis is about conceptions of public opinion *in* the New Right, rather than about the New Right *per se*. As such, it examines in depth the thought and actions of the most representative and influential figures, rather than providing an exhaustive prosopography. This permits synchronic analysis of political thought to be integrated

into a chronological, diachronic narrative, which is better able to capture the complexities of political change and reveal the 'logic of the situation'. New Right thinkers were acutely aware that the political climate they sought to reshape was not a static, unchanging entity. Nor, as they were to discover, did politicians possess exclusive mastery over its evolution. Therefore their reading of public opinion was, by necessity, subject to continual reassessment.

Any effort to unearth the origins and trace the evolution of a dynamic intellectual project poses the inevitable problem of definition. Nevertheless, in spite of this, I am convinced that one can speak of a distinct intellectual movement of the 'New Right', which cohered behind an effort to transform the climate of public opinion in Britain. In *The Conservative Nation* (1974), Andrew Gamble discerned the emergence of a New Right tendency within the Conservative Party. This tendency was, he argued, 'overwhelmingly involved in the politics of support', focusing its critique on the prevailing electoral perspective of the party leadership.[64] What the New Right proffered was less an alternative to the party's policies at the time, than an alternative means of selling them to the public. From their perspective, Enoch Powell's success in establishing a cross-class appeal indicated the possibility of a politics that was not defined by material determinants. In this thesis, I would like to re-establish this definition of the New Right in terms of the politics of support.

The fact that this was a central preoccupation of the tendency has been somewhat lost in subsequent historiography, as the concept of the 'New Right' has been conflated with neo-liberalism. By 1988, Gamble was writing of a New Right 'doctrine of the free economy and strong state', which was adopted by the political project of 'Thatcherism'.[65] The term 'New Right' now denoted a body of (largely economic) ideas, rather than a tendency *within* the Conservative Party dedicated to establishing an alternative politics of support. Others, like Norman Barry, explicitly employed the term 'New Right' to denote a movement of free market, anti-

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[64] Gamble, *Conservative Nation*, p.102.
[65] Andrew Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State: The Politics of Thatcherism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p.35.

collectivist thinking *separate* to the Conservative Party.[66] However, for Richard Cockett, free market economics and 'Thatcherism' were essentially the same thing. The 'doctrine of economic liberalism' was, Cockett insisted, the 'unique and galvanizing idea behind "Thatcherism"'.[67] One might argue that the 'transnational' historiographical turn, which has turned attention to a global 'neoliberal thought collective' directed by the Mont Pelerin Society, has reinforced this conflation of politics and ideas in the study of 'Thatcherism'.[68] As a result, it has become unclear whether the term New Right denotes a body of neoliberal ideas, the political expression of those ideas, or a political movement that employed those ideas instrumentally.

This thesis inclines to the latter perspective, regarding policies as instrumental means to political ends. One might contend that it is rather cynical to assume that politicians' ultimate end was electoral success, rather than the establishment of a good society. However, one need not accept this dichotomy. From the perspective of Conservative politicians, a good, decent, or responsible society was one in which the Conservative Party won elections. Likewise, Labour politicians would likely have assumed that a socialist society would be sympathetic to their party. Hence, the cultivation of a supportive climate of public opinion was, if anything, *the* ultimate end of all political activity. The best means of fostering such a climate was, however, a matter of great contention. It is in the context of these debates that this thesis situates the British New Right.

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[66] Norman P. Barry, *The New Right* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p.86.

[67] Richard Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution 1931-1983* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), pp.2, 4.

[68] Mirowski and Plehwe (eds), *The Road from Mont Pèlerin*; Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets Since the Depression* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012); Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

Chapter Outline

The following five chapters proceed broadly chronologically from the election of Edward Heath as Conservative Party leader in 1965 to Margaret Thatcher's third successive general election victory in 1987. They trace the emergence and institutionalization of an ambitious New Right project to transform the climate of public opinion, followed by its frustration and ultimate marginalization by proponents of alternative conceptions of public opinion.

The New Right emerged initially in reaction to what Angus Maude described disparagingly as the 'politics of technique'.[69] Indeed, the extent to which the Conservative Party adopted a novel political approach under the leadership of Edward Heath has yet to be fully appreciated.[70] Chapter One seeks to remedy this, uncovering how, in reaction against the paternalistic approach to political education of earlier Conservative governments, the party's research and political apparatus turned to psephology and the social sciences in search of a more 'scientific' understanding of public opinion. The politics of support was increasingly envisaged as a technical enterprise, in which voter behaviour could be objectively quantified and determined by economic stimuli.

However, for some Conservative politicians, academics and journalists, this 'modernizing' politics was egregiously 'superficial and materialistic'.[71] Unlike the electoral sociologists, they deemed public opinion to exist autonomously from material determinants, such that it was malleable. Therefore political actors were not compelled merely to accommodate public opinion; they could reshape it. Chapter Two explores the philosophical basis of these critiques and argues that, by the mid-1970s, they had begun to coalesce into a more formally organized New Right movement. While, in many respects, this outlook harked back to an older notion of

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[69] Angus Maude, *The Common Problem* (London: Constable, 1969), p.220.

[70] Parts of Chapter One draw upon my previously published article: Charles Lockwood, '"Action Not Words": The Conservative Party, Public Opinion and "Scientific" Politics, c.1945-70', *Twentieth Century British History* (2019), hwz014, https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwz014.

[71] Angus Maude, 'Winter of Tory Discontent', *The Spectator*, 14 January 1966, p.11.

paternalistic political education, it developed into a radical project to transform British political culture and eradicate socialism from the body politic. Chapter Three reveals how Alfred Sherman and his Centre for Policy Studies became a nodal point for the New Right, gaining practical influence over the Conservative Party following Margaret Thatcher's election as party leader. After discussing the foundation of the CPS and its intellectual *raison d'être*, the second half of the chapter narrates how this project to transform the climate of public opinion was systematized into the 'Stepping Stones' project of John Hoskyns and Norman Strauss. The Stepping Stones report has been discussed heretofore largely in the narrow context of the Conservatives' plans for industrial relations reform. I contend that it amounted to a much more ambitious project to transform the 'Mental Sets' of voters through a intricately planned programme of political education.

However, this precisely defined strategy did not go entirely according to plan. Chapter Four begins with an account of the attempt led by Hoskyns, in his new role as Director of the Number 10 Policy Unit, to 'continue Stepping Stones at Number Ten'.[72] The Policy Unit's efforts to focus on the long-term strategic reorientation of British political culture were subordinated to short-term 'accelerator' measures as the government grappled with unanticipated difficulties with its macroeconomic policy as well as stubborn resistance from vested interest groups. The argument that intellectual persuasion – the 'battle of ideas' – must *precede* fundamental reforms became less attractive to Conservatives in this context. Indeed, as the second half of the chapter demonstrates, an intellectual counterargument was advanced against the Stepping Stones approach, which doubted the efficacy of rhetoric in fundamentally altering political culture, contending instead that changes in public attitudes must necessarily *follow* economic reforms. The second half of the chapter uncovers the influence of public choice theories from the mid-1980s. Their growing influence within the Thatcher governments was a corollary of a more general shift away from what might be termed a 'macropolitical' perspective – focused on overarching

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[72] John Hoskyns, *Just in Time: Inside the Thatcher Revolution* (London: Aurum Press, 2000), p.97.

themes of national values and monetary policy – towards a 'micropolitical' approach, which sought to adjust the material incentives that influenced the choices made by individual actors.

This 'micropolitical' perspective was reinforced by the ever-growing influence of marketing consultancies on the Conservative Party. Chapter Five takes a step back from high political narrative, attempting to uncover the epistemological underpinnings of political marketing. New qualitative methods of consumer research, which came to be known as 'psychographics', attempted to model the fluid values and lifestyles of the British public in a period of social disaggregation. By 1987, the government no longer seemed committed to 'reversing the trend' of what Alfred Sherman perceived as British moral and cultural decline.[73] To the contrary, it was now committed to taking 'the next moves forward', working with the grain of popular aspirations.[74] The final section of the chapter reflects on the extent to which this increasingly professionalized politics constituted a philosophical divergence from the perspective of the early New Right. The intemperate objections of an ostracized Sherman to what he termed the 'adman ascendancy' underscore the extent to which the record of the Thatcher governments did not entirely fulfil the expectations of the New Right's progenitors.

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[73] Keith Joseph, *Reversing the Trend: A Critical Re-appraisal of Conservative Economic and Social Policies: Seven Speeches* (Chichester: Barry Rose, 1975).

[74] Conservative Party General Election Manifesto 1987, in Iain Dale (ed.) *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos, 1900*-1997 (London: Routledge, 2000).

Chapter One: The Politics of Technique*

Any attempt to understand the origins of the British New Right must begin from an awareness of the political and intellectual context against which they reacted. This chapter argues that, during Edward Heath's decade as leader, the Conservative Party adopted what was in many respects a novel conception of the relationship between public opinion and political leadership. Under the influence of contemporary theories of electoral sociology and psephology, influential figures within the party's research and political education apparatus encouraged a rationalistic approach to political administration, repudiating the Conservative Party's traditional preference for idealist and organicist philosophical assumptions. Indeed, the party's preoccupation with economic management in the Heath years coincided with a loss of faith in the formative role of moral and rhetorical appeals in shaping public opinion.[1] While the Conservative Party's embrace, in the early 1960s, of the political economy of 'modernization' has been well established,[2] less attention has been paid to the concomitant shift in electoral perspective. It was the materialistic conception of voter behaviour that prevailed during Heath's leadership, as much as any particular policy prescriptions, which so offended those Conservatives who would form the New Right. In fact, one might contend that in many respects the 'political consensus', which the New Right repudiated, was more recent in origin than has been widely appreciated.

In retrospect, the Heath Government may be remembered as 'the last loyal signatory of the 1944 pact', committed, much like the Conservative Governments of

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* Parts of this chapter draw upon my previously published article: Charles Lockwood, '"Action Not Words": The Conservative Party, Public Opinion and "Scientific" Politics, c.1945-70', *Twentieth Century British History* (2019), hwz014, https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwz014.

[1] On the emergence of these debates within the party apparatus during the late 1950s and early 1960s, see Lockwood, '"Action Not Words"'.

[2] Jim Tomlinson, 'Conservative Modernisation, 1960-64: Too Little, Too Late?', *Contemporary British History* 3 (1997), pp.18-38; David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain 1920-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

the 1950s, to the maintenance of full employment and a universal and comprehensive welfare state by means of an expansionist macroeconomic policy and the institutional mediation of interest groups.[3] Subsequently, there was without question something of a caesura in the nation's political economy as the promotion of growth and full employment ceased to be the guiding lights of macroeconomic policy.[4] Nevertheless, the determination of Margaret Thatcher's close associates to draw a sharp line between her governments and all their postwar predecessors has obscured the degree to which Edward Heath's accession to the party leadership in 1965 was, at the time, considered to constitute the advent of 'a new style of government'.[5] The general election defeat of October 1964 reinforced the determination of those within the Conservative Party apparatus to dispel the party's fusty, socially archaic image with an approach that would shake Britain out of the lethargy of relative decline. Heath, the party's first elected leader, immediately instituted what the Nuffield study of the 1966 general election described as 'one of the most ambitious efforts at internal reform ever undertaken by a British party'.[6] In combining the roles of party leader and chairman of the Advisory Committee on Policy, he personally sought to recast the Conservative Party as a force for meritocracy and modernization.

To a certain degree, this change in approach reflected the personal inclinations and characteristics of a leader impatient with what he saw as the dilettantism of past governments. Enoch Powell derided Heath's belief that 'If all the relevant facts are assembled and put together by competent people, and logical

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[3] Keith Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Vol. 2. Threats to the Postwar Settlement: Britain, 1961-74* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 390. See also Vernon Bogdanor, 'The Fall of Heath and the End of the Postwar Settlement', in Stuart Ball and Anthony Seldon (eds), *The Heath Government, 1970-1974: A Reappraisal* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman, 1996), pp.317-390.

[4] Nigel Lawson, 'The British Experiment' (*The Mais Lecture*), 18 June 1984, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/109504, [hereafter MTFW].

[5] Conservative Party General Election Manifesto 1970: A Better Tomorrow, in Iain Dale (ed.) *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos, 1900-1997* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.177-200, at p.177.

[6] David Butler and Anthony King, *The British General Election of 1966* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p.53.

analysis made, then that will provide the answer.'[7] Yet, this faith in the capacity of rationally formulated policy to accelerate the modernization of Britain was not exclusive to Heath. Rather, it arose from an intellectual and political zeitgeist in which the ideal of technical expertise was pre-eminent. Mike Savage has described the early 1960s as 'The Moment of Sociology', in which the social sciences emerged in Britain's provincial universities to challenge the dominance of Oxbridge-style liberal scholarship.[8] This aspiration for a more 'scientific' approach was also prevalent in the political sphere. In many ways Heath sought to emulate the 'modern' technocratic image of Harold Wilson, whose vivid rhetoric of 'the white heat of the technological revolution' had apparently caught the mood of the electorate.[9] But this was not simply a question of public image. In fact, in spite of his later reputation for stubborn impenetrability to outside advice, the thinking of psephologists and sociologists, as interpreted by the Conservative Research Department (CRD), heavily influenced Heath's approach.

This chapter uncovers how a certain electoral perspective, formulated within the CRD and the party's policy groups, underpinned the Conservative Party's technocratic approach to policymaking under Heath. Although the Research Department had existed in some form since 1929, it gained unprecedented influence over party strategy after 1964, co-ordinating a comprehensive policy review.[10] After the October 1964 defeat, Sir Alec Douglas-Home had placed Heath in overall charge of policymaking in the guise of Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Policy. That Heath retained this position upon becoming leader the following year (and did

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[7] Ibid., p.344.

[8] Mike Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: The Politics of Method* (Oxford, 2010), 112-134.

[9] Harold Wilson, *The New Britain: Labour's Plan Outlined: Selected Speeches,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964). For a contextualisation of Wilson's rhetoric within the internecine disputes of the Labour Party, see Tudor Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party: From Gaitskell to Blair* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 49-66.

[10] Brendon Sewill, 'Policy-Making for Heath', in Alistair Cooke (ed.), *Tory Policy-Making: The Conservative Research Department, 1929-2009* (Eastbourne: Manor Creative, 2009), pp.55-78, at p.55.

not fill the vacancy of Chairman of the CRD following Rab Butler's departure) is indicative of his desire to make the department an important appendage of the party's leadership.[11] Under the purview of Sir Michael Fraser, the CRD was at the heart of the Conservative Party's detailed preparations for power in the late 1960s, acting as a sort of civil service for the network of thirty-six policy groups established by Heath.[12] The CRD would become the primary channel through which contemporary theories of electoral sociology and political science informed the party's thinking.

Contrary to the claims of Heath's critics that he was blind to the necessity to cultivate electoral support, his focus on 'Action not Words' (the title of the 1966 manifesto), prioritizing detailed policy formulation over mellifluous rhetoric, was informed by contemporary assumptions regarding the nature of public opinion. CRD analysis indicated that administrative competence was the *sine qua non* of political success. In fact, in his early years as leader, Heath's taciturn and brusque persona was considered an electoral asset. The leader was earmarked by the CRD for the role of 'Ted Heath – Man of Action', exhibiting a 'purposeful, strong personality and a good physical appearance'. They hoped that he would be seen as 'a man's man, but at the same time [be] admired by women for his ability to make decisions'.[13] Whilst this emphasis on sober professionalism, rather than inspirational leadership, was forced to some degree upon the Conservatives' publicity team by Heath's introversion, it was also encouraged by psephological analysis. Tommy Thompson, the party's in-house polling expert, advised Heath to undertake publicity activities that highlighted his familiarity with modern science and technology, such as visiting

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[11] John Campbell, *Edward Heath: A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993), p.167; John Ramsden, *The Making of Conservative Party Policy: The Conservative Research Department since 1929* (London: Longman, 1980), p.231; Sewill, 'Policy-Making for Heath', p.55.

[12] Fraser was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party in 1964, acting as Secretary to the Shadow Cabinet (then officially titled the Leader's Consultative Committee) whilst also overseeing the CRD. He was thus a linchpin of the party operation. Tim Bale, *The Conservatives since 1945: The Drivers of Party Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 117.

[13] C. Austen Bounes Paper, 'Ted Heath – Man of Action', Oxford, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive [hereafter CPA], CRD 3/9/43.

a BP oil rig or Jodrell Bank Observatory.[14] Prior to the 1966 election, a CRD paper suggested that the most effective piece of publicity Heath could achieve would be a double-page spread in the *Daily Mirror* showing him flying a helicopter, surveying the rush hour traffic chaos below.[15] Not only would this reach seventy per cent of the Conservatives' 'target voters', it would encapsulate the party's message that, with recourse to modern technology and effective management, a Heath Government, by taking a detached overview of Britain, could solve the gridlock the country had found itself ensnared in. Evidently, Heath's technocratic and rationalistic governing ethos was not simply a manifestation of his personal idiosyncrasies; it was a contrived political strategy in which electoral exigencies were at the forefront of preoccupations.

After examining in detail the nature and origins of the electoral perspective that prevailed within the CRD and policy groups during the Conservatives' period in opposition during 1960s, this chapter attempts to demonstrate the repercussions of that perspective for the party during the 1970 general election campaign and the subsequent Heath government. Conservative policymakers became convinced that they were operating within a climate of public opinion in which the majority of voters were more inclined to support the Labour Party than the Conservatives. It will become clear that the Heath government's purported 'U-turns' were a logical response to an a electoral perspective in which support for the government was contingent upon assuring positive economic 'outputs', rather than upon idealistic appeals to shared values or culture. It was in reaction to this electoral perspective - which Angus Maude labelled pejoratively as the politics of 'technique' and the 'material calculus'- that the British New Right would coalesce initially.[16] Understanding this 'Heathite' or CRD electoral perspective is therefore a

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[14] Tommy Thompson, 'List of Suggested Activities for the Party Leader', 14 December 1965, CPA, CRD 3/33/1.

[15] Bounes, 'Ted Heath-Man of Action'.

[16] Angus Maude, *The Common Problem* (London: Constable, 1969), pp.220-3.

fundamental prerequisite to understanding the origins and outlook of the nascent New Right.

1.1 The Naked Psephologist

From the late 1950s, the Conservative Party's political outlook was profoundly influenced by the growing disciplines of electoral sociology and psephology. Although, as Andrew Taylor has established, the party began to monitor opinion polling systematically as early as 1947, its impact on strategy remained limited in the following decade.[17] The fact that polling took nearly a fortnight to process, coupled with the Conservatives' ostensibly stable levels of public support, limited its influence.[18] Laura Beers has reinforced this impression, noting that, during the 1950s, Conservative leaders remained sceptical of approaches that implied public opinion existed independently of political activity.[19] The prevailing ideal of political leadership as an exercise in public education - leading, rather than following, public opinion - rendered them averse to any suggestion that party policy should be modified in order to accommodate popular attitudes. Under Heath's leadership, however, these anxieties were brushed aside as the systematic study of public opinion and electoral change reached an unprecedented scale, to the extent that the Party was spending £30,000 per annum on polling.[20] This included a contract with Humphrey Taylor's Opinion Research Centre, as well as the employment of the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB) to undertake an innovative long-term panel survey of 4,500 swing voters.[21] While historians have noted this intensified attention

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[17] Andrew Taylor, '"The Record of the 1950s Is Irrelevant": The Conservative Party, Electoral Strategy and Opinion Research, 1945-64', *Contemporary British History* 17 (2003), pp.81-110, at pp.83-4, 88.

[18] Ramsden, *Making of Conservative Party Policy*, p.145.

[19] Laura Beers, '"Whose Opinion?": Changing Attitudes Towards Opinion Polling in British Politics, 1937-1964', *Twentieth Century British History* 17 (2006), pp.177-205, at pp.196-7.

[20] Bale, *The Conservatives since 1945*, pp.117-118. This is equivalent to more than £400,000 today.

[21] Ibid., p.118.

to polling,[22] the degree to which such ostensibly mundane developments were the basis for a fundamental reworking of the party's approach to politics cannot be stressed enough.

Indeed, Rab Butler recognized the revolutionary influence of electoral sociology in a foreword he wrote for Robert Milne and Hugh Mackenzie's *Marginal Seat, 1955* (1958). Turning David Hume on his head, Butler remarked that politics was now 'concerned not with what ought to be but with what actually is.'[23] Instead of being an exercise in persuasion, accruing electoral support in pursuit of abstract ideals, politics was increasingly considered to be an empirical, scientific enterprise, in which public opinion existed as an objective reality independent of party political activity. By privileging the material and quantifiable over the ideal and qualitative, the new electoral sociology tended to instil a perspective that viewed voter choice as epiphenomenal of material and structural determinants, such as occupational status or disposable income. This outlook would have profound implications for the Conservatives' approach to electoral politics and government.

On both sides of the Atlantic,[24] behavioural political scientists and sociologists tended to be dismissive of what Robert McKenzie and Allan Silver termed the 'transient aspects of public opinion', believing them to be ultimately subordinate to long-term structural trends in voter behaviour.[25] While such social and demographic trends appeared auspicious for the Conservatives amidst the 'affluence'

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[22] Mark Abrams, 'Public Opinion Polls and Political Parties', *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 27 (1963), pp.9-18; Taylor, '"The Record of the 1950s"', pp.92-3; Beers, '"Whose Opinion?"', p.200.

[23] Robert Milne and Hugh Mackenzie, *Marginal Seat, 1955: A Study of Voting Behaviour in the Constituency of Bristol North East at the General Election of 1955* (London: Hansard Society for Parliamentary Government, 1958), p.vii.

[24] The seminal work of electoral sociology was Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), which examined voter behaviour in Erie County, Ohio. Robert Milne and Hugh Mackenzie's *Straight Fight* (London: Hansard Society, 1954) and *Marginal Seat, 1955* emulated their approach in Britain with systematic studies of voting behaviour in the constituencies of Greenwich and Bristol North West respectively.

[25] Robert McKenzie and Allan Silver, *Angels in Marble: Working Class Conservatives in Urban England* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1968), pp.16-17.

of the 1950s,[26] by the mid-1960s their position appeared much more unfavourable. Following the Conservatives' defeat in the 1964 general election, McKenzie and Silver advanced an influential thesis that the consistent support for the party amongst a section of the working class was weakening as 'deferential' voters were dying out.[27] Increasingly, according to this interpretation, voters acted according to 'secular', instrumental motivations, supporting the party they believed best equipped to advance their objective material interests. This theory of voter instrumentalism was only reinforced by John Goldthorpe and David Lockwood's affluent worker study, which, in seeking to debunk the '*embourgeoisement*' thesis, argued that the newly affluent workers of Luton displayed characteristics of 'instrumental collectivism'.[28] The pathway to electoral success now appeared to be through propitiating the material desires of voters, rather than through appeals to patriotism and the preservation of inherited institutions and social hierarchies. McKenzie and Silver did make a passing remark about the possibility that a decline in 'deferential' responses to their survey questions might be a consequence as well as a cause of the Conservative Party's decreased reliance on explicit appeals to deferential values.[29] Yet, their sample survey methodology was incapable of determining whether working-class deference to the Conservatives was contingent upon the nature of their appeals and policies or whether its existence was predetermined by structural factors

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[26] After the Labour Party's third successive electoral defeat in 1959 a number of studies advanced a thesis that its working-class core vote was being eroded by a process of '*embourgeoisement*' in an increasingly affluent society. See Mark Abrams and Richard Rose, *Must Labour Lose?* (London: Penguin, 1960) and Ferdynand Zweig, *The Worker in an Affluent Society: Family, Life and Industry* (London: Heinemann, 1961).

[27] McKenzie and Silver, *Angels in Marble*.

[28] John Goldthorpe and David Lockwood, 'Affluence and the British Class Structure', *Sociological Review* 11:2 (1963), pp.133-163, at p.152. The results of their study were published in John Goldthorpe *et al.*, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968-69).

[29] Ibid., p.256. One academic who questioned this perspective was Raphael Samuel in the *New Left Review*. Samuel wrote that support for the Conservatives was not dependent upon income and unemployment statistics, but rather the 'pattern of power that prevails and the image people hold of the nation and of themselves'. Raphael Samuel, 'The Deference Voter', *New Left Review* 1 (1960), pp.9-13, at p.10.

out of politicians' control. Nevertheless, the Conservatives seemed to absorb the lesson that they should adapt to voters' instrumental attitudes rather than try to alter them.

This is perhaps unsurprising given the extent to which the academic orthodoxy in political science downplayed the influence of political activity, in particular election campaigning, on voter choice. Perhaps the most influential work of political science in this period was David Butler and Donald Stokes' *Political Change in Britain* (1969).[30] James Douglas of the CRD, who coordinated the policy exercise of 1965-70, cited Butler and Stokes during the first meeting of the Steering Committee, a group convened to draft the party manifesto. Douglas claimed that the study demonstrated that 'the proportion of the electorate which was directly influenced by policies was infinitesimal'.[31] In making this argument, he was enthusiastically supported by Sir Michael Fraser, who was known to read extracts of *Political Change in Britain* to the Policy Initiatives Committee.[32] An important lesson stressed by Butler and Stokes was that, in seeking to understand electoral choice, attention ought not to be confined to 'what is in the voters' minds'; rather, one should look beyond 'social-psychological factors' to the 'objective economic context of perceptions and behaviour'.[33] Far from resembling the ideal of the 'informed spectator', they noted that the average voter was largely ignorant of party policies, instead making judgements based upon what might be termed '*valence*' issues. They had only weak and ephemeral preferences for particular policy alternatives.[34] Instead, voters seemed to judge the competence of the party in power on the basis of prevailing economic conditions, indicating that 'party government

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[30] David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political Change in Britain: The Evolution of Electoral Choice* (London: Macmillan, 1969).

[31] Minutes of the First Meeting of the Steering Committee, 21 October 1969, The Papers of Michael Wolff, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge [hereafter WP], WLFF 3/2/63.

[32] Ramsden, *Making of Conservative Party Policy,* p.270.

[33] Butler and Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, pp.7-8.

[34] Ibid., p.175. The issue of 'coloured immigration' was a notable exception to this trend, arousing strong opinions.

serves to institutionalize *post hoc ergo propter hoc* reasoning on a grand scale'.[35] The logical inference from this was the most effective means for a party to maintain power was through economic management, employing the levers of the state to maintain a buoyant public mood. This was even more important given the apparent weakening of voters' ties to political parties. Politicians were shocked to discover that fully one third of the electorate had changed their vote during the three intervals Butler and Stokes examined (summer 1963, autumn 1964 and spring 1966).[36] Contrary to idealized visions of the open-minded independent voter carefully weighing up his or her options, political scientists concurred in their dim view of floating voters' level of political enlightenment. Milne and Mackenzie portrayed the floater as not Hamlet, but Launcelot Gobbo.[37] Butler and Stokes corroborated this, noting that the voters most attentive to political communication were those most committed in their political affiliation. From this they deduced a law of the 'diminishing marginal utility of communication to the voter'.[38] An idealized vision of political leadership, channelling the virtuous power of the people, appeared discredited.

In a similar vein to McKenzie and Silver, Butler and Stokes indicated that long-term structural trends were seeing Conservative identification amongst the electorate atrophy. Dismissing the so-called 'senescence' theory, whereby voters generally became more conservative with age, they instead advanced a 'cohort' theory. Given that Conservative strength was, at that time, weakest amongst those born in the 1920s, they concluded that the years of adolescence and early adulthood were the critical period in which political identities were forged.[39] Higher levels of Conservative identification among the older cohorts could be accounted for by the fact that the Labour Party was a relatively new parliamentary force during these

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[35] Ibid., p.30.
[36] Ibid., p.293.
[37] Milne and Hugh Mackenzie, *Marginal Seat, 1955*, p.192.
[38] Butler and Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, pp.222-224.
[39] Ibid., pp.58-9, 249.

voters' youth. Amongst the later cohorts, Labour came much closer to a full yield of votes from its 'natural' class base amongst manual workers.[40] As much as politicians attempted to shape the political identifications of voters, Butler and Stokes were adamant that the norms of the peer group were a much stronger influence over partisan affiliation. In the tradition of structural functionalist sociologists like Talcott Parsons, they seemed to consider political parties as representing the interests of discrete solidary groups, positing a triangular relationship of self-class-party.[41] While, according to this reading, some voters could be convinced to either abstain or vote for a different party, largely on account of their current economic circumstances, this was unlikely to alter their underlying partisan self-image. In fact, Butler and Stokes detected a 'homing' tendency, whereby those who switched their vote nonetheless retained a partisan identification determined by their social class.[42] Manual workers who voted Conservative often did so *in spite* of their natural loyalty. Hence, given the Labour Party's much larger 'natural' electoral base, the Conservatives' bases of electoral support appeared decidedly fragile.

These lessons were not lost on the party's strategists. Following the snap general election of 1966, members of the CRD sought to reconcile their conviction that they had run a better campaign than Labour with the fact that they had nonetheless succumbed to a substantial defeat. Brendon Sewill, the department's director, wrote in his election report that it was now obvious that elections were won in between election campaigns and not during them. Rather than voting *for* new policies, Sewill believed that voters considered the election to be a referendum on the record of the incumbent government.[43] The party vice-chairman, Geoffrey Johnson-

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[40] Ibid., p.185.

[41] Ibid., pp.173-4. For the influence of American sociologists on this 'pluralist' conception of political parties see Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor, 'Introduction: Electoral Sociology and the Historians', in Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor (eds), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1997), pp.1-26, at pp.6-8.

[42] Butler and Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, pp.298-9.

[43] Brendon Sewill Report on the 1966 General Election, 28 April 1966, CPA, CRD 3/9/105. Sir Michael Fraser, in his report, concurred that the Conservatives won the campaign but lost the election,

Smith, frankly confessed that he was not optimistic about the future in light of the 'built-in Labour majority'.[44] Faced with this unsettling picture of an increasingly volatile electorate, whose underlying sympathies appeared skewed towards Labour, Conservative strategists concluded that, in order to win and maintain power, they would have to swim strongly against the tide. James Douglas, reflecting on Butler and Stokes' cohort theory, was convinced that the Conservatives would 'have to run to stay in the same place'.[45] He advocated skewing the Conservatives' publicity and campaigning efforts towards a target audience of younger voters. According to the cohort theory they would be much more impressionable than older C2DE voters whose long-term support the Conservatives could not afford to take for granted given 'their natural identification with the Labour Party'.[46] In 1971, a New Voters Group was convened under the chairmanship of Sir Michael Fraser in order to discuss means to diminish Labour's two to one advantage in party identification amongst fourteen to twenty-six year olds. In light of the results of an ORC survey, they concluded that recent studies were correct in positing an increasingly 'secular' outlook amongst voters. It appeared that young voters were possessed of a somewhat cynical perspective, their 'prime interest in politics [being] the obtaining of economic benefits for themselves.' Rather than deferring to politicians of higher social status, they were more likely to 'defer' to those who could 'deliver the economic goods'. Hence, on this reading, the Conservatives should advertise themselves as the most competent managers of the economy. Young voters were apparently 'not interested in esoteric or idealistic crusades'.[47] It is not difficult to see how analyses like these translated into a technocratic approach to government, which prioritized the maintenance of positive economic indicators at all costs.

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demonstrating that they were unable to get through to the 'plebs'. Meeting on General Election Result/Campaign, 4 April 1966, CPA, CRD 3/9/107.

[44] Meeting on General Election Result/Campaign, 4 April 1966, CPA, CRD 3/9/107.

[45] James Douglas memorandum to John Biffen, 20 February 1976, CPA, CRD 4/27/28.

[46] Donald Harker memorandum to James Douglas, 29 June 1972, CPA, CRD 3/1/1.

[47] Paper on 'The New Voter', c.1971, WP, WLFF 3/6/4.

Of course, not everyone in the Conservative Party accepted the conclusions of the contemporary electoral sociology without question. Butler and Stokes' bleak prognosis for the future of the Conservative Party caused considerable indignation. Iain Macleod was animated to write a scathing review of *Political Change in Britain*, accusing the authors of ignoring the fact that their surveys were undertaken during periods of unusual Labour strength in the opinion polls and of loading their questions in order to contrive responses that supported their grand thesis.[48] Whilst this no doubt represented a serious critique of the particular surveys, it did not go as far as to challenge the underlying assumptions of electoral sociology regarding the material determinants of voter behaviour. One figure within the CRD who did do this was Patrick Cosgrave, who used an article in *The Spectator* to attack the idea that class acted as a determining factor in electoral politics, operating to the advantage of Labour. This he labelled 'Nuffield predestinarianism'.[49] 'Down with the Psephologists!' became a repeated rallying call in the pages of *The Spectator* during the 1960s as its columnists relished being out of step with intellectual fashion.[50] John Wells wrote a satirical review of a new study by one 'Dr Desmond "Fatty" Butler' the 'scatter-brained slide-rule expert' of the 'Nuffield Free Money Distribution Centre, Oxford', perhaps better known for his television appearances as 'David'. His new study, *The Human Tool*, by basing its findings on a study of human reproductive patterns, predicted a 'Labour renaissance during the next few years, culminating in the total destruction of all rival parties'. In the 'great automated workshop of the cosmos', political trends were destined to continue 'until the end of time'. Attempts to alter the behaviour of the human machine by 'political stimulus' would only induce a series of physiological responses, including the dropping of eyelids, the shrinking of the sexual organs and the escape of air from the lungs with a 'gentle

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[48] 'Patrick Cosgrave on the election', *The Spectator*, 1 May 1971, p.15.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Alan Watkins, 'Down with the Psephologists!', *The Spectator*, 24 September 1964, p.4. See also Alan Watkins, 'The Old Firm', *The Spectator*, 28 October 1966, p.13; Auberon Waugh, 'Political Commentary: Surbiton shows the way', *The Spectator*, 31 October 1969, p.4.

moaning sound'.[51] However, this sceptical perspective certainly did not gain favour within the CRD. As Brendon Sewill recalled, Patrick Cosgrave was out on a limb during his short period at the Research Department, being almost the only member to not develop a sense of loyalty to Heath. As 'a loquacious Irishman', he was perhaps temperamentally unsuited to his role briefing Heath before Prime Minister's Questions.[52] For the most part, electoral sociology and political science were considered important authorities in the process of transforming the Conservative Party's political approach.

1.2 A New Style of Government

Defeat in 1964, following accusations by Harold Wilson that the Conservatives' 'grousemoor' image was 'effete' and anachronistic, inspired a new generation of Conservatives in the party's research and educational apparatus to recast the party as a modern, efficient and progressive force, in-tune with the changing social and economic composition of British society.[53] In doing so, they sought to glean insights from contemporary sociology in order to understand the 'centre people', whose votes they needed to capture.[54] The Conservative Political Centre (CPC), the party's political education branch, published two series of pamphlets, *New Tasks* (1965) and *New Techniques* (1965-1966), in which contributors urged the party to tailor its appeal to the growing social demographic of young executives and technologists.[55] Sociologists on both sides of the Atlantic seemed to be competing to establish a neologism to describe this group. The new MP and former CRD employee, Eldon Griffiths, counted a plethora of labels - 'the Technocrats', 'the New Model Bourgeoisie', 'the Meritocracy', 'the salariat' - but settled on the term 'the New

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[51] John Wells, 'Afterthought: The Naked Psephologist', 3 October 1969, pp.25-26.

[52] Sewill, 'Policy-Making for Heath', p.68.

[53] Alan Watkins, 'The Language of Politics', *The Spectator*, 30 March 1967, p.3.

[54] Eldon Griffiths, *The New Competitors* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1965), p.4.

[55] The CPC was brought under the ambit of Conservative Central Office in March 1965, bringing its activities closer to the party leadership. Bale, *The Conservatives since 1945*, p.112.

Competitors'.[56] The votes of these young salaried employees, whose number had

increased twenty-five per cent between 1952 and 1964, were apparently there to be

won as, having 'thrown off the dust of the old working-class', they were now part of

'the great Unorganised' seeking a political vehicle for their aspirations.[57] Yet,

according to Griffiths, in spite of their disillusionment with socialism, the 'New

Competitors' were not yet ready to embrace the Conservative Party.[58] They

apparently had no sympathy with 'that part of the Tory Party which acts as

tradition's custodian' and abhorred inherited privilege.[59] Griffiths suggested that,

having no great capital reserves, they might be attracted by policies that shifted the

burden of taxation onto wealth and that held down the price of land and property.[60]

However, the most important policy the Conservatives could adhere to in order to

attract their support would be a policy of 'steady expansion'.[61] Having often literally

mortgaged their futures through hire purchase in the expectation of rising incomes,

the 'New Competitors' yearned for the conviction, apparently widespread in

America, that tomorrow would be better than today. It was this desire to propitiate

the material desires of an expanding social demographic that encouraged

Conservatives to view economic growth as the ultimate end of their policies. In this

respect, their reading of social change served to determine their political agenda.

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[56] Griffiths, *The New Competitors*, p.4. Griffiths was referring to the following prominent sociological works: James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution* (New York: John Day Co., 1941); Charles Curran, 'The Passing of the Tribunes', *Encounter* 33 (1956), pp.17-21; Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1958).

[57] Griffiths, *The New Competitors*, pp.4-6.

[58] Ibid., pp.5-6. Griffiths argued that the 'New Competitors' had no time for the traditional postwar working-class culture of cloth caps, pigeon racing, tinned salmon teas and greyhounds. But at the same time they were 'affronted by tellytopia', the postwar (socialist) society of anonymous housing estates, collective holiday camps and bingo.

[59] Ibid., p.6.

[60] Ibid., p.10. The Tax Policy Group did give serious consideration to the establishment of a wealth tax, but after intense debate the idea was shut down. See Sewill, 'Policy-Making for Heath', pp.60-61. A pledge to cap mortgage rates at 9.5% was adopted in 1974 during Margaret Thatcher's period as Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment.

[61] Ibid., pp.8-9.

David Howell, the Director of the CPC (1964-1966), encapsulated this eagerness to accommodate changing public aspirations in an essay he wrote in 1966 calling on Conservatives to shake off their 'restrictionist mentality' and welcome the rising material expectations of the public.[62] Like Griffiths, he was eager that the party align itself with the supposed 'revolt against the slackness and unprofessionalism' of British society by young professionals by portraying the party as composed of forward-looking and accomplished administrators.[63] In order to pursue an expansionist economic policy and demonstrate administrative competence, Howell contended that Conservatives had to embrace, rather than denounce, the power of the state, arguing that it could be a 'liberating agency' when employed in support of free enterprise.[64] Individual enterprise and an active state were, in his eyes, not mutually exclusive. Indeed, he cited approvingly Andrew Shonfield's *Modern Capitalism* (1965), which argued that, in order to exploit the full 'potentialities' of the economy, politicians would have to develop new techniques to take effective control over enlarged governmental machinery.[65] Given that deference to social superiors was widely believed to be dissipating in favour of deference to administrative competence, it was unsurprising that some Conservatives began to look sympathetically towards techniques of state economic management. Howell, reporting on the work of the Public Sector Research Unit in 1967, wrote that evidence of *how* the opposition party intended to do things and demonstration of their capability in 'administration' was crucial in establishing their 'credibility' as a potential government.[66] He hoped that bodies like the National Economic

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[62] David Howell, 'Towards Stability', in *Conservatism Today: Four Personal Points of View by Robert Blake, Peregrine Worsthorne, David Howell, Nigel Lawson* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1966), pp.34-46, at pp. 38-41. Howell criticized those Conservatives inclined to flirt with the 'sharp dose of unemployment view' accusing them of taking a 'grim satisfaction' in redundancies. This, he predicted, would result in the party being stigmatized for its 'Republican economics' (a reference to Barry Goldwater's disastrous presidential campaign of 1964).

[63] Griffiths, *The New Competitors*, p.11.

[64] Howell, 'Towards Stability', pp.35-36, 43.

[65] Ibid., pp.42-43.

[66] Memorandum on the work of the Public Sector Research Unit by David Howell, 16 March 1967, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, Oxford [hereafter CPA], ACP 3/8.

Development Council (NEDC) could facilitate the efficiencies and co-ordination apparently so admired by the 'New Competitors'.[67] This embrace of the potential of the state was part of a process of reconciliation with social and economic change, in which a group of young Conservatives sought to overcome the perceived stereotype of the party as anachronistic by aligning themselves with the trend towards managerial capitalism.

A perhaps inevitable concomitant to this faith in the capacity of state action to increase economic efficiency was a rationalistic philosophy, according to which the state could scientifically interpret human behaviour. In a period in which scientific developments seemed to be accelerating rapidly, many Conservatives urged the party to embrace the potential of science. Lord Hailsham, in a 1962 lecture on 'Science and Society' at Oxford, argued that science 'should permeate every government department'.[68] He attempted to reconcile this faith in scientifically determined progress with Conservative traditionalism, arguing that the doctrine of the 'uniformity and intelligibility of nature' derived from the monotheism of Judaism and Christianity.[69] Advances in science and especially computer technology appeared to hold out the possibility of the government exercising a rational mastery over nature. In the field of economics, these new computer technologies signalled unprecedented possibilities for statistical forecasting. William Rees-Mogg, who later converted to monetarism, told a CPC meeting at Oxford that economics was moving away from a 'primitive position' towards being a fully-fledged science, employing Keynesian techniques to respond to the 'economic necessity to move away from smaller to larger units'.[70] Academic orthodoxy, in this case the theory of economies of scale, possessed a magnetic hold over those Conservatives who were eager to

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[67] David Howell, *Efficiency and Beyond: A Re-Examination of Our Long-Term Economic Goals* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1965), p.6.

[68] The Rt. Hon. Viscount Hailsham, Q.C., 'Iconoclasm and Civilisation', in *Science and Society: Eight Oxford Lectures* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1962), pp.10-17, at p.14.

[69] Ibid., p.11.

[70] William Rees-Mogg, 'The Conquest of Poverty', in *Science and Society*, pp.39-41, 40-41.

catch up with the times.[71] Rees-Mogg went as far as to declare extravagantly that 'Keynes can be compared in the history of economics to Lister in the history of surgery', moving society closer to a universal comprehension of the objective laws of economics.[72] With recourse to science, government could overcome the irrational obstacles to economic growth and progress.

In a period when Harold Wilson promised to 'harness the scientific revolution' to modernize Britain's economy and society, the Conservatives evidently felt compelled to establish their own 'scientific' credentials.[73] The party's Policy Group on Science and Technology reported in 1969 that 'The whole of policy and public action must be conditioned by the advancing knowledge of our natural universe (science) and by an understanding of the means through which this knowledge can be applied to human ends (technology)'.[74] In other words, they envisioned government as a rational scientific endeavour, adopting a thoroughly positivist philosophy. Such an outlook, composed of a belief that society was governed by objective laws, seemed to go hand in hand with economic and environmental determinism. The Policy Group on Areas of Urban Stress, established during the Heath government, reported that 'many social problems are very largely the consequence of poor social conditions and that juvenile delinquency is to a large extent a consequence of social deprivation which is best dealt with by positive discrimination'.[75] In many areas, Conservative policymakers seemed to assume that the material conditions of society determined human behaviour, leading them to

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[71] Even Sir Keith Joseph, who was later one of the most fervent critics of state planning, heeded the academic orthodoxy regarding economies of scale. As Secretary of State for Social Services (1970-1974), he persuaded the Cabinet to support a huge rationalization of the National Health Service, drawing upon a study by the consultancy firm McKinsey. Bale, *The Conservatives since 1945*, p.174.

[72] Rees-Mogg, 'The Conquest of Poverty', p.40.

[73] Harold Wilson, *The New Britain: Labour's Plan Outlined: Selected Speeches,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).

[74] Policy Group on Science and Technology, Second Report, June 1969, CPA, ACP 3/19.

[75] Report of the Policy Group on Areas of Urban Stress, 25 March 1974, CPA, ACP 3/21A. The Policy Group was chaired by David Lane and also included Norman Fowler, Timothy Raison, Teddy Taylor and Christopher Tugendhat.

focus their attention on ameliorating objective living standards rather than grounding their political appeal in the subjective realms of morality and cultural identity.

Indeed, officials at the CRD consciously repudiated philosophical and qualitative approaches to politics in their attempts to rationalize government. In 1965, James Douglas called for a 're-education' of the party, so that the 'philosophy of modern management' could be applied to government.[76] He insisted that 'If we are to adopt the philosophy of modern management we shall have to be analytic and quantitative when before we only needed to be dogmatic and qualitative'.[77] Thus, rather than formulating policy according to philosophical maxims, he felt that the government ought to take a rigidly empirical approach, analysing problems on a case-by-case basis. If this were to be applied to the thorny question of whether to adopt an incomes policy, it would mean, according to Douglas, firstly analysing the 'constituent factors' of the problem of inflation, secondly quantifying each factor, and only then formulating a 'balanced policy' including checks and incentives to apply to each factor.[78] Underlying this quantitative approach to counter-inflation was an assumption that human behaviour could be scientifically predicted. Like a behaviouralist social scientist, Douglas seemed to believe that human behaviour was essentially a response to external stimuli, such as price levels and wage growth. This outlook extended to his belief that voting behaviour could be objectively determined. For the Selsdon Park policy weekend, prior to the 1970 general election, Douglas prepared a paper entitled 'Thoughts on the Polls', in which he outlined his belief, based upon his reading of social science, that 'the electorate react to the outputs of the government'.[79] His paper drew upon analysis by Charles Goodhart, which compared the effect of various 'outputs' on government popularity over a twenty-year period, finding, for example, that a rise in the inflation rate of around two and a half per cent could be considered equivalent to an increase in unemployment of

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[76] James Douglas, Draft Memorandum, 30 November 1965, CPA, CRD 3/33/1.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] James Douglas, 'Thoughts on the Polls', 8 January 1970, CPA, CRD 3/9/93.

100,000 in its effect on public opinion.[80] Such quantitative analyses were, in his mind, indispensable to any political party. In a follow-up to his Selsdon paper, Douglas sent Sir Michael Fraser a graph showing the correlation between the unemployment rate and the incumbent government's level of unpopularity, arguing that this was the sort of information he would like to see attached with an '"A" certificate'.[81] Demonstrating the superior economic competence of the Conservative Party and delivering the material goods were for Douglas, and those of like mind, the only ways to counteract Labour's in-built advantage in class identification.

In order to acquaint themselves with the latest developments in academia and nurture deference to their administrative expertise, the Conservatives made an unprecedented effort to establish connections with universities and 'harness' intellectuals to their cause.[82] After being impressed with his establishment of the Pressure for Social and Economic Toryism (PEST) pressure group at the University of Cambridge, Heath appointed the twenty-three year old Michael Spicer to a position in the CRD in February 1966 with a remit to establish links with Conservative sympathizers in universities and to devise means of involving them in the policy-making process.[83] In an attempt to modernize the party's perspective, he was encouraged to pay particular attention to economists, sociologists and scientists, who could facilitate the sort of 'forward-planning' apparently required by modern government.[84] Some of these connections inevitably contributed to the rationalistic

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[80] Ibid.

[81] James Douglas memorandum to Sir Michael Fraser, 'Shadow Cabinet Weekend: "Thoughts on the Polls"', 21 January 1970, CPA, CRD 3/9/93.

[82] Brendon Sewill memorandum to Sir Michael Fraser, 'Harnessing the Intellectuals', 10 January 1968, CPA, CRD 3/35/5.

[83] Michael Spicer, *The Spicer Diaries* (London: Biteback, 2012), p.16. The University of Sussex historian, Keith Middlemas, suggested that academics be included on 'Party Committees of Inquiry', modelled on the Congressional Committees of the United States. He argued that they could then perform a similar role to that played by the Webbs and R. H. Tawney for the Labour Party in the 1920s, laying the groundwork for party policy and influencing intelligent public opinion. Keith Middlemas Paper, 'Party Committees of Inquiry', 17 November 1966, CPA, CRD 3/35/5.

[84] Michael Spicer, '"Where Now?" A report by Michael Spicer on findings and conclusions from visits to universities', 6 May 1966, CPA, CRD 3/35/5.

philosophy that the Conservatives developed under Heath. For example, Spicer facilitated a relationship between James Douglas and Professor Graham Pyatt, a political scientist at the University of Warwick, who was convinced that an imminent breakthrough in statistical techniques would permit 'an altogether more scientific approach to the study of social and other ecological factors in voting behaviour'.[85] Pyatt advocated a behavioural approach, applying the methods of the physical sciences to politics. Voters, according to this perspective, should be conceived as existing between three 'poles' – Conservative, Labour and abstention – each of which exerted an 'attractive force', like a magnet.[86] What role individual agency and political culture played in this model was unclear. Spicer also helped to organize seminars, combining academics and politicians, to explore the future direction of Conservative policy. One such seminar, which took place at the CRD in September 1966, considered the question of 'Planning and its relationship to the market'. In spite of the concerns of Iain Macleod and Keith Joseph that the privileging of quantification of the 'economic rate of return' was neglecting 'cultural and political factors' in economic policymaking, the discussion focused on establishing a more scientific approach to economic policy.[87] N. J. Gibson of the University of Manchester encouraged the Conservatives to adopt a philosophy of 'planned free enterprise', in which the state acted as a catalyst, rather than a hindrance, to economic efficiency.[88] Academic connections such as these ensured that the

[85] James Douglas, 'Note of Meeting: Professor Graham Pyatt, Psephological Studies at Warwick', 20 July 1966, CPA, CRD 3/35/3. Pyatt agreed to keep in touch with Douglas as he sought to establish a Planning and Political Studies unit at Warwick.
[86] Ibid. The Conservatives' engagement with the latest developments in psephology and political science culminated in Edward Heath's visit to Nuffield College, Oxford in November 1967.
[87] Report of the meeting held at the CRD on 'Planning and its relationship to the market', 27 September 1966, CPA, CRD 3/35/5.
[88] Paper by N. J. Gibson (Manchester) on 'Conservative Planning', August 1966, CPA, CRD 3/35/5; Report of the meeting held at the CRD on 'Planning and its relationship to the market'. In the face of scepticism from Keith Joseph regarding the emphasis on 'planning', David Howell was eager to stress that there was no conflict between economic efficiency and the application of quantitative techniques to government planning.

prevailing academic orthodoxy of the 1960s exerted a significant influence over both Conservative policymaking and the party's electoral strategy.

However, Spicer's universities exercise also had the unintended consequence of generating and magnifying tensions amongst Conservatives of differing outlooks and dispositions. Its preoccupation with the fields of science, technology and the social sciences risked alienating scholars in the arts and humanities. Although the eminent biographer of Benjamin Disraeli, Robert Blake, was a central figure in co-ordinating links between the party and Oxford dons, not all Conservative dons were so closely involved. Spicer seemed to have particular difficulty engaging with the truculent Peterhouse historian Maurice Cowling. During Spicer's visit to Oxford in December 1965 with the Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Science, Edward Boyle, Cowling abruptly disappeared from the reception. Boyle was left thinking he had said something calamitous regarding education policy; however, Robert Blake later reassured them that Cowling's departure had been the result of 'inadvisedly drinking whisky on top of eating oysters at lunch'.[89] Regardless of the sincerity of Cowling's excuse, CRD officials continued to fear that he had become alienated from the party leadership. In October 1966, Spicer wrote to Sir Michael Fraser declaring himself 'worried about Maurice Cowling'. Having excluded him from a list of invitees to a party hosted by Peter Walker - which most of the Shadow Cabinet attended - due to his desire to introduce 'new blood', he feared that Cowling might be piqued.[90] Spicer had managed to meet Cowling the previous summer, when the historian had encouraged Shadow Cabinet members to attend dinners with dons and insisted that any writing academics did for the Conservative cause should go uncensored, perhaps betraying his mistrust of the party machine.[91] Indeed, Cowling took the initiative in establishing his own connections with party figures, independently from the direction of Spicer and the CRD. He told Spicer that he was

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[89] Letter from Robert Blake to Sir Michael Fraser, 15 December 1965, CPA, CRD 3/35/4.

[90] Michael Spicer memorandum to Sir Michael Fraser, 28 October 1966, CPA, CRD 3/35/5.

[91] Michael Spicer report, 'Links with the Universities', 12 July 1966, CPA, CRD 3/35/5.

organizing a dinner at Peterhouse, to which he had invited Enoch Powell.[92] Although Cowling did later host Heath and Fraser in May 1967, he seemed to have formed a particularly close connection with the Shadow Defence Secretary.[93] A year later, both Cowling and Powell had clearly set out their stalls as fervent critics of the party leadership.

Another dyspeptic personality who became estranged from the universities exercise was Angus Maude. In March 1967, a year after his dismissal from the Conservative frontbench (see Chapter Two), Heath gave Maude a role working on a study of social and economic trends into the 1980s, working closely with Michael Spicer and his academic connections.[94] Spicer hoped that conducting such a study, with recourse to 'sophisticated analytical techniques', would convey the public impression that the party was 'an integral part of the modern idiom'.[95] However, Maude's approach to 'the 1985 exercise' did not please those at the CRD. Sewill wrote to Fraser the following January that the project was making 'disappointing progress'. From Sewill's perspective, rather than contributing to future policy-making in a practical manner, Maude seemed to view the exercise as an opportunity to engage in leisurely discussions in senior common rooms prior to writing a disquisition on 'why our whole social and philosophical structure is going wrong'.[96] Spicer, looking back, suggested that Maude was bored with the job and more interested in attacking Heath's 'materialist' approach.[97]

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[92] Ibid.

[93] Michael Spicer report on the University Exercise and appendices of dinners, 9 November 1967, CPA, CRD 3/35/5.

[94] Brendon Sewill had first raised the idea by sending Heath a *Fortune* article on the American Academy of Arts and Sciences 'Commission on the Year 2000'. James Douglas also highlighted a similar exercise by the French government, focusing on the year 1985. Brendon Sewill memorandum to Edward Heath, 20 January 1967, The Papers of Sir Edward Heath, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries [hereafter EHP], MS. Heath E/3/2/32; James Douglas memorandum to John MacGregor, 'Britain A.D. 2,000', 7 February 1967, EHP, MS. Heath E/3/2/32; Michael Spicer note to Sir Michael Fraser, 'The 1985 Group', 10 February 1967, EHP, MS. Heath E/3/2/32; Spicer, *The Spicer Diaries*, pp.24-25.

[95] Michael Spicer paper, 'Centre Sixty Eight', 7 March 1967, EHP, MS. Heath E/3/2/32.

[96] Sewill memo to Fraser, 'Harnessing the Intellectuals'.

[97] Spicer, *The Spicer Diaries*, p.26.

Evidently, Maude's outlook contrasted sharply with those of Sewill and Spicer, whose primary concern was with what Maude would later deride as 'the politics of technique'.[98] Sewill, in his memorandum bemoaning Maude's failure to contribute to practical policy-making, proffered his belief that 'we are missing a lot of tricks at present in the whole field of the current application of science', advocating the establishment of a 'Panel of Scientific Advisers'. This, he insisted, would impress both 'technologists' and the general public.[99] Michael Spicer likewise found his attention diverted towards the application of new technologies to policy-making. In collaboration with Mervyn Pike, who had recently left the Shadow Frontbench, he co-founded the Conservative Systems Research Centre (CSRC), which purchased a state-of-the-art Control Data 6600 supercomputer in order to apply the latest econometric techniques to analyse the potential impact of future policies.[100] No stone was to be left unturned in the determination of those in and around the CRD that a Heath government would be the most well-prepared ever to accede to office. Attitudes like those of Maude were considered anachronistic in the context of a country in the midst of the scientific revolution.

Hence, it was not only Heath, the 'Permanent Secretary *manqué*', who was preoccupied with the mastery of policy detail at this time.[101] The young Conservatives in the CRD and associated bodies, informed by the latest precepts of management and the social sciences, drove his technocratic agenda. No longer, they hoped, would the Conservative Party be caricatured as a party of gentlemanly dilettantes, out-of-step with modern Britain. Douglas Hurd, Heath's Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS), recorded in his diary that, prior to the 1970 general election, the Conservatives were equipped with 'policies more elaborate and better researched

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[98] Maude, *Common Problem*, p.220.

[99] Sewill memo to Fraser, 'Harnessing the Intellectuals'.

[100] Spicer, *The Spicer Diaries*, p.27. The CSRC was emulating approaches pioneered by think tanks in the United States. Spicer was sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation to travel to the United States with Professor Douglas Hague in autumn 1969 (p.30).

[101] Campbell, *Edward Heath,* p.490.

than any Opposition had ever attempted'.[102] Yet, behind this façade of preparedness, the Conservative Opposition were having trouble reconciling their carefully devised policies with the exigencies of democratic government. Their conviction that it was possible to devise a rationally formulated policy programme, which could then be implemented in office, failed to anticipate the extent to which their government would be constrained by the pressure of events. As we shall see, their deterministic conception of public opinion ultimately proved irreconcilable with their aspiration for a long-term strategic outlook.

1.3 The Dilemma of Democracy

Since the publication of John Campbell's biography of Edward Heath in 1993, it has become commonplace for historians to take issue with the dominant narrative, pushed by the New Right, that his government performed a series of 'U-turns', reversing their initial liberalizing strategy with recourse to the failed corporatist and interventionist strategies of the previous decade.[103] Heath's strident rhetoric of the 'quiet revolution', Campbell argued, nurtured a misconception that he was ideologically wedded to a free market approach that marked a definite break from the post-war 'Butskellite' consensus.[104] Robert Taylor reinforced the image of a pragmatic Heath, portraying him as an 'impatient technocrat' who considered his liberalizing economic and industrial policies as dispensable means to the overriding end of modernization.[105] State power was an instrument that could be held in reserve, employed if liberalization failed to catalyse growth. His absolute determination to enter the European Economic Community with the economy in competitive shape no

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[102] Douglas Hurd, *An End to Promises: Sketch of a Government, 1970-1974* (London: Collins, 1979), p.10.

[103] Campbell, *Edward Heath*. One notable study that maintains that the Heath government abandoned a free-market strategy, to which they were firmly wedded, is Martin Holmes, *The Failure of the Heath Government* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).

[104] Campbell, *Edward Heath*, pp.264-267.

[105] Robert Taylor, 'The Heath Government and Industrial Relations: Myth and Reality', in Ball and Seldon (eds), *The Heath Government*, pp.161-90, at p.164.

doubt aggravated Heath's impatience with businesses and corporations that failed to make the most of the incentives to invest that his government had imparted. Such considerations led Keith Middlemas to argue that Heath's policy reversals should be considered not so much as 'U-turns', but as 'logical consequences of a diagnosis that self-discipline and self-government had failed'.[106]

This empirical approach to government, constantly adjusting policy in light of prevailing circumstances, left Heath open to criticisms that he lacked a coherent governing philosophy, neglecting the political leader's role of moral leadership of the nation as he entangled himself in the minutiae of legislation. After what he perceived as Heath's disastrous performance at the 1965 Conservative Party Conference, *The Spectator* magazine's political columnist, Alan Watkins, described Heath as 'the man with the grasshopper mind', jumping from subject to subject without realizing that leadership 'demands some kind of theme'.[107] Throughout Heath's leadership, the pages of *The Spectator* were replete with lamentations of his 'extraordinary insensitivity to the nuances of language' and his 'inability to make an emotional as well as an intellectual connection between the detailed legislative programme and the aspirations of the people'.[108] When Heath occasionally contributed to the magazine, he only seemed to reinforce this impression. Upon his accession to the leadership, Heath wrote an article describing his approach to parliamentary opposition. The Conservatives, he declared, would develop 'new techniques of coordination and specialisation' to 'press the Government not only on the big issues but also on the technical points of the Bill'.[109] In making 'a judgement as to whether the Bill is achieving its purpose', the Opposition seemed to neglect the question of philosophical differences with the Labour Government, preferring to restrict their

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[106] Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Vol. 2.*, p.292.

[107] Alan Watkins, 'The Troubles of Mr Heath', *The Spectator*, 14 October 1965, pp.6-7.

[108] Ibid.; Alan Watkins, 'The Language of Politics', *The Spectator*, 30 March 1967, p.3; Maurice Cowling, 'Mr Heath, Mr Powell and the Future', *The Spectator*, 9 October 1970; Shirley Robin Letwin, 'Shirley Letwin on the Masks of Politics', *The Spectator*, 30 December 1972, p.13.

[109] Edward Heath, 'Where Do We Go From Here?', *The Spectator*, 22 July 1965, p.23.

criticisms to esoteric questions of policy process.[110] In an effort to answer his critics at *The Spectator*, Heath wrote an article in April 1970 defending the Opposition's approach. Their objective, he argued, should be to 'see where the gaps are in the legislation' and remedy failures of the 'machinery of government' produced by 'careless planning and poor co-ordination'. '[E]motion and rhetoric', he insisted, would only serve to 'cloud the issue'.[111] Government was to Heath a mechanism or machine in need of fine-tuning according to the rational expertise of elected administrators. It is easy to characterize this outlook as blindness to the need to cultivate public support; but, as we have seen, Heath and many of the party's senior officials felt that the most effective means of accruing support was through the demonstration of administrative proficiency and the maintenance of positive government 'outputs'. They saw no difference between the 'politics of support' and the 'politics of power'.

One could argue that it was this conception of public opinion – belief in its apparent deference to administrative competence and tendency to react to objective economic stimuli – and not any inherent pragmatism or absence of policy preferences that resulted in the schizophrenic character of the Heath government. The overriding priority of maintaining rising living standards and retaining power contributed to the subordination of the Heath government's long-term objectives to short-term electoral concerns. In fact, reading the government's Cabinet papers, it is clear that their long-term objectives were to reduce the size of the public sector significantly, decreasing government intervention in the economy through a 'refusal to support uneconomic activities'.[112] Notes on the government's strategy by the Cabinet Secretary, Burke Trend, from September 1971, describe the government's two principles as 'privatisation and devolution'. Such policies were 'regarded by the

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[110] Ibid.

[111] Edward Heath, 'A policy for the environment', 10 April 1970, pp.8-9. Heath's article seemed almost parodic as he digressed onto 'the economics of de-salinisation, particularly in the case of dual-purpose plants'.

[112] Government Strategy: Sectoral Notes, Burke Trend, 30 September 1971, http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C8678927.

Government as desirable in themselves'.[113] However, they were not prepared to allow a short-term economic downturn as the price for implementing what they deemed to be the necessary long-term reforms. It was feared that if the government did not demonstrate their determination to pursue an expansionist policy, the consequent collapse in confidence would negate any incentives derived from liberalization. Accordingly, a 'strategy for short-run economic management' was deemed to be 'a necessary precondition for improved growth performance in the longer term'.[114] The constraint of public opinion seemed to preclude a hands-off approach to economic management. Maintaining in balance the 'nexus of inter-related variables' – in other words, juggling 'high levels of employment, an acceptable degree of price stability and a strong balance of payments' - was deemed to be the 'real determinant of mass support'.[115]

If one reads closely the 'rough' transcript of the Selsdon Park Conference of February 1970, it becomes clear that members of Heath's Shadow Cabinet were grappling with a dilemma: the policies they considered to be necessary in the long-term were deemed to assure electoral failure. As Iain Macleod succinctly put it, 'our answers are not politics'.[116] Robert Carr warned that they 'mustn't make a stand on nurses and teachers', reminding those present that '25 per cent of people in this country [are] in the public sector'.[117] Even Keith Joseph, who would later criticize the Heath government's accommodating approach to hostile public opinion, was not prepared to repeal the Wilson government's Industrial Reorganisation Act, 'until we get a new climate'.[118] Lord Hailsham despaired that the government was doomed to

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[113] Ibid. It is unlikely that the term 'privatisation' was employed in the same sense as it was from the mid-1980s, following the sale of British Telecom. Trend appears to use the term here to denote a general reduction of state intervention.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Official Group, Note on the Current Political Situation and Outlook, May 1971, CPA, OG/71/84; Government Strategy: Sectoral Notes, Burke Trend, 30 September 1971, http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C8678927.

[116] Selsdon Meeting transcript (morning session) ['rough' transcript], CPA, CRD 3/9/93.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

'go round and round the mulberry bush', facing ruinous strikes and public hostility if they attempted to force through free market reforms and industrial relations legislation.[119] His experiences during the Heath government informed his reflections in *The Dilemma of Democracy* (1978), in which he advocated the creation of a written constitution as the only means of restraining the powers of central government. In this treatise he painted an extremely pessimistic picture of the British political situation, declaring that 'We are living in the City of Destruction, a dying country in a dying civilization'.[120] For him, the 'ratchet effect of socialism', was 'inherently irreversible', given the degree to which the philosophy of 'legal positivism' (the belief that it was in the nature of sovereignty for the state to exercise untrammelled power) had become instilled in British political culture.[121] Evidently, Hailsham and many of his colleagues recognized that necessary reforms could not be implemented within the existing political constraints. Furthermore, they did not seem to believe that it would ever be possible for such constraints to be circumvented.

Contrary to arguments that the Conservatives, during Heath's decade as leader, lacked any intellectual alternative to Keynesian counter-cyclical policies, they were well aware of the possibility of a more *laissez-faire* approach to economic policy.[122] In January 1968, Brendon Sewill sent a paper to Heath suggesting that inflation could be tackled by 'raising interest rates to create a short sharp deflation', undertaking trade union reform and running the economy at a higher unemployment rate of around two to two-and-a-half per cent.[123] When he reiterated this case two years later, Sewill claimed his paper was 'passed over quietly' at the Selsdon Park

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[119] Ibid.

[120] Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone, *The Dilemma of Democracy: Diagnosis and Prescription* (London: Collins, 1979), p.15.

[121] Ibid., pp.52, 219.

[122] For the former view see Anthony Seldon, 'The Heath Government in History', in Ball and Seldon (eds), *The Heath Government*, pp. 1-20, at p.14.

[123] Sewill, 'Policy-Making for Heath', p.72. See also CRD Paper, 'Controlling Prices', 21 January 1970, CPA, CRD 3/9/92, in which Sewill's case was reiterated for discussion at the Selsdon Park weekend.

weekend.[124] This is unsurprising given that deflation and the alternative of employing a statutory prices and incomes policy were both unacceptable to the Shadow Cabinet for different reasons. While the Economic Policy Group had determined as early as 1967 that compulsory price and income control would constitute an intolerable 'extension of state control to all aspects of economic life', they were equally perturbed by the expected damage to their position in the opinion polls that deflationary policies would trigger.[125] Along with Sewill's apparently disregarded paper, the Shadow Cabinet also considered a series of papers that stressed the deleterious effects of unemployment on their standing with public opinion. James Douglas maintained that the best predictor of support for a party in office was the level of demand for labour lagged by about four to six months.[126] He went as far to declare unequivocally that 'the Government's popularity is primarily determined by the pressure of demand'.[127] The implication of this axiom was that a free market approach would leave the government's support contingent upon forces outside its control.

No doubt feeling that they were trapped between a rock and a hard place, the Economic Policy Group sought to avoid the evade the necessity of adopting a direct counter-inflationary policy by seeking to change the framework in which prices and incomes were determined.[128] They hoped that the proposed Industrial Relations Bill, which would impose legally binding contracts upon trade unions in return for statutory protections, in concert with exhortatory 'arm twisting' by government, could eradicate the restrictive practices and unrealistic bargaining that resulted in wage growth accelerating faster than productivity.[129] Essentially, they hoped that

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[124] Sewill, 'Policy-Making for Heath', p.73.

[125] Swinton Policy Discussion Weekend, 15 – 17 September 1967: Discussion by the Economic Policy Group, CPA, CRD 3/32/1.

[126] Douglas, 'Thoughts on the Polls'.

[127] Douglas memorandum to Fraser, 'Shadow Cabinet Weekend: "Thoughts on the Polls"'.

[128] Swinton Policy Discussion Weekend, 15-17 September 1967: Discussion by the Economic Policy Group.

[129] Ibid.; CRD Paper, 'Controlling Prices'.

self-discipline could substitute for the statutory controls that had been sheltering workers from the harsher discipline of the free market. Efforts to address the question of inflation more directly proved abortive. A Shadow Cabinet sub-committee on prices, formed after the Selsdon weekend, managed only one inconclusive meeting.[130] Sewill, following the 1970 election, deplored the fact that an ill-considered passage on inflation had been 'spatchcocked' into the manifesto at the last minute.[131] Its unequivocal rejection of 'the philosophy of prices and incomes policy' obscured the fact that many in the party were unprepared to entrust their fate to the whims of the market.[132] Clearly, perceived political constraints had fostered an ambivalent mindset that left Heath's Shadow Cabinet with contradictory long and short-term preoccupations. Their cognizance of working against the grain of public opinion would prove even more debilitating for the party once it was entrusted with the levers of government.

1.4 The Folk Memory of Failure

In spite of their surprise general election victory in June 1970, Conservative officials retained a consciousness of operating in an inauspicious climate of public opinion. This perspective had clear repercussions for the policy decisions taken during Heath's government. One can trace the channels through which the CRD conveyed their psephological analysis to the Shadow Cabinet. Moreover, one can discern a clear correlation between their advice and the government's short-term decision-making.

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[130] Brendon Sewill, CRD Report on 1970 General Election, 17 July 1970, CPA, CRD 3/9/95. The committee was composed of Iain Macleod, Keith Joseph, Reginald Maudling and Robert Carr. The former two were very much against the adoption of statutory controls and the latter two inclined to favour them.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Conservative Manifesto 1970, in Dale (ed.), *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos*, p.180. John Campbell makes the point that a casuist might argue that a rejection of the *philosophy* of wage control does not necessary preclude its *practice*. Campbell, *Edward Heath*, p.232.

Brendon Sewill's depiction of himself as a lonely voice of reason is rather disingenuous given that he, just as much as other officials at the CRD, shared an electoral perspective which assumed that support for the party was contingent upon positive economic indicators. In his report on the election campaign, Sewill insisted that, as late as early June, the Conservatives were headed for defeat, as the electorate seemed prepared to defer to Roy Jenkins and the incumbent government's apparently successful management of the economy. 'Only the [unexpectedly bad] trade figures published three days before Polling Day', he argued, 'broke the trance'.[133] Although the Opposition had successfully defeated an incumbent government that had seemingly managed to nurture an improvement in the economic indicators during the latter half of the parliament, officials at the CRD remained committed to their deterministic conception of electoral behaviour. Having said that, James Douglas was forced to nuance his theory in order for it to retain explanatory power. He accepted that the opposition party, whilst having no power to directly influence the outputs of government, could condition the electorate's response to them. In this campaign, he felt that the Conservatives had managed to convince the electorate to consider Labour's economic record in a longer-term perspective.[134] However, this acceptance of politicians' capacity to guide public opinion did not overturn their conviction that malign long-term demographic changes were making their electoral position ever more precarious. It is remarkable how, even following an election victory, many Conservatives felt the public was predisposed against them. Sewill, in his election report, reiterated the 'public's greater identification with Labour' and the Conservative Party's intrinsic status as 'an alien exterior Party' to the majority of voters.[135] To justify this pessimism, CRD officials drew upon the BMRB panel

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[133] Sewill, CRD Report on 1970 General Election. The CRD's belief that skilled workers were the key 'floating' demographic was somewhat dispelled when the swing amongst C2s was only 2.7 per cent, much lower than the six per cent amongst ABs and 7.4 per cent amongst DE voters. Bale, *The Conservatives since 1945*, p.120.

[134] James Douglas memorandum to Sir Michael Fraser, 'General Election 1970 – Reports', 26 June 1970, CPA, CRD 3/9/95.

[135] Sewill, CRD Report on 1970 General Election.

study, which suggested that changes in voting intention were not normally accompanied by any concomitant change in basic party identification amongst working-class voters.[136] In fact, even as the polls moved in the Conservatives' favour, they detected an 'undertow' movement whereby younger voters were increasingly inclined to support Labour. [137] That older voters and women were swinging towards the Conservatives seemed to provide them with little succour. These analyses encouraged members of the Heath government to believe, rightly or wrongly, that they entered office in June 1970 on probation with an acquisitive and instrumental electorate that was not naturally sympathetic towards them.

Rather than taking the election result as a refutation of theories of voter instrumentalism, the party leadership's belief in the premium on delivering the economic goods was only reinforced. One can clearly trace how the electoral perspective of CRD officials was disseminated to the party leadership. Surveying the political situation in May 1971, the Official Group, composed of MPs and officials from the CRD and Central Office, concluded that they could not afford a 'leisurely approach'.[138] The time lag between economic improvements and the public's perception of the results meant that action must be expedited wherever possible. If not, they feared that they would be encumbered, like the Wilson government, with the dreaded 'folk memory of failure'.[139] Recurrent sterling crises, hikes in taxation and James Callaghan's ignominious devaluation of sterling had apparently lingered long in voters' memories. Regardless of subsequent economic improvements, if the 'nexus of inter-related variables' were permitted to deteriorate, the government's reputation for administrative competence would be grievously, and perhaps irrevocably, undermined. Hence, the report argued, there was absolutely no scope for 'trading off' between growth, unemployment and prices; negative economic

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[136] BMRB continuous research on attitudes, July 1968, CPA, CCO 180/25/1/12; BMRB Report, 'Floating Voters and the New Electorate', April 1973, CPA, CCO 180/25/1/17. BMRB was a subsidiary of the American advertising agency J. Walter Thompson.

[137] BMRB continuous research on attitudes.

[138] Official Group, Note on the Current Political Situation and Outlook, May 1971.

[139] Ibid.

indicators portended electoral disaster.[140] Ominously, the report added that even 'Some accidental factor that suddenly dramatised unemployment, perhaps merely the passing of the million mark, could change the situation rapidly'.[141] Such an outlook was difficult to reconcile with a liberal economic policy. If economic indicators began to deteriorate, the government would be faced with a choice between taking remedial action and the alternative of waiting helplessly for the electorate to throw them out at the next election in favour of a Labour Party bound to a hard left policy programme.[142]

As economic indicators took a turn for the worse during the winter of 1971-1972, assuring positive 'outputs' became the government's primary preoccupation. The means of achieving them proved to be ultimately of only secondary importance. In January 1972, unemployment did indeed reach one million for the first time since 1947. That month, James Douglas wrote a paper on 'Future Policy Making' for the Advisory Committee on Policy. Rather than fearing allegations of 'U-turns' upon the adoption of industrial intervention and statutory wage controls, he argued that 'of ultimately a far greater importance to our credibility as promise-keepers and for our electoral prospects' were the 'mix of promises on prices, jobs, regional prosperity, growth and living standards'.[143] Ironically, in spite of fighting an election on an unprecedentedly detailed manifesto, Douglas seemed to consider the government as having been elected on a general mandate to deliver economic success, rather than on a programme of particular measures oriented towards that objective. One might suggest, perhaps cynically, that the policy exercise had served the largely cosmetic purpose of conveying a general impression of professionalism and competence

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[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Following the Labour Party's election defeat in 1970, its National Executive Committee shifted strongly to the left. As a result, *Labour's Programme 1973* would include radical policies including price controls, an extension of industrial democracy, planning agreements and the nationalization of 'twenty-five of our largest manufacturers' under the aegis of a National Enterprise Board. See Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, Fourth Edition (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp.188-189.

[143] James Douglas, 'Future Policy Making', 19 January 1972, CPA, ACP 3/20.

without any concomitant belief that voters actually cared about its particular content.[144] If one examines the papers of Michael Wolff, Edward Heath's 'Special Adviser', it could not be clearer that the Conservative leadership felt an overwhelming pressure towards activism, fearing the effect inaction would have on public opinion. In September 1972, Wolff wrote an alarmist paper claiming that the impression that the government had no effective policy was fostering public disillusionment. It was inevitable, he insisted, that they needed 'a definite policy by mid-October'.[145] Ultimately, the government resorted to a statutory freeze on wages in November. The only other means of decisive government action against inflation, a restrictive monetary policy, was deemed a 'non-starter' given the inevitable repercussions of such a course for the unemployment rate.[146] Progress towards a long-term objective of liberalization was impossible when the government considered it incumbent upon them to maintain in balance the 'nexus of inter-related variables'.

In many respects, figures like Wolff and Douglas were correct in their reading of public expectations of government. An Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) polling report in November 1972 suggested that a large majority (sixty-seven per cent) of voters, including eighty-four per cent of Conservative voters, supported the statutory wage freeze.[147] Corroborating this, a review of the tactical situation the following year concluded that the upturn in the government's popularity could be attributed largely to the decisive measures it had taken against inflation and unemployment.[148] Nevertheless, it would be mistaken to suggest that the government took an interventionist course with alacrity. Douglas Hurd, who served as the Prime

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[144] This was, of course, wholly consistent with the Butler and Stokes thesis of voters' deference to a party's perceived administrative competence but general ignorance of policy.

[145] Michael Wolff, Paper on Inflation Policy, 5 September 1972, WP, WLFF 3/2/12. Wolff included an appendix of previous statements party representatives had made regarding prices and incomes policy.

[146] Michael Wolff, Notes on Incomes Policy Seminar at Cranfield Institute of Technology, 15-16 September 1972, WP, WLFF 3/2/12.

[147] Opinion Research Centre Report, November 1972, WP, WLFF 3/1/5.

[148] Steering Committee, 'Strategy/Political Situation in 1973', 14 February 1973, CPA, SC 10.

Minister's political secretary in government, recorded his dismay in his diary. Although ministers were acutely aware of the drawbacks of a statutory prices and incomes policy, Hurd argued that the 'facts of power' militated against any realistic economic policy.[149] For instance, he attributed the government's 'massacre' at the hands of the miners in February 1972 to a hostile climate of public opinion, which all but forced Heath to appoint Lord Wilberforce to prescribe an inflationary wage settlement.[150] Indeed, a Gallup poll had suggested that fifty-five per cent supported the National Union of Mineworkers' claim against only sixteen per cent who sympathised with the National Coal Board's position.[151] 'One day', Hurd wrote ruefully, 'people will wake up to their own interests'.[152]

Looking back on the Heath government's disintegration later in the decade, Hurd argued that they could not possibly have succeeded having been elected in 1970 'with policies and a vocabulary which were now out of date'.[153] If a future government were to succeed in implementing liberalizing reforms, it would have to lay the groundwork first by fully establishing the necessity for change in the public mind and then be elected on that platform. There had to be 'an end to promises' that aroused unrealistic expectations regarding the role of government.[154] It could no longer assume that public opinion could be mediated through interest and pressure groups like the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI); it would have to appeal over their heads and articulate the grievances of consumers.[155] In Hurd's reflections one can discern the beginnings of a recognition that, rather than seeking to accommodate themselves to a hostile climate of public opinion, Conservatives would, in the future, be compelled to devise a

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[149] Hurd, *An End to Promises*, pp.103, 105.
[150] Ibid., p.97, 103. Campbell, *Edward Heath*, p.415.
[151] Campbell, *Edward Heath*, p.415. Campbell suggests that the public still retained a somewhat romantic attitude towards the miners.
[152] Hurd, *An End to Promises*, p.107.
[153] Ibid., p.136.
[154] Ibid., p.136.
[155] Ibid., pp.106-107, 152.

strategy to reshape it. More profoundly, this presaged an intellectual shift towards a conception of public opinion as existing autonomously from material determinants and capable of being recast through rhetorical prowess.

1.5 The People of the Forward Stampede

Following the Heath Government's loss of office in February 1974, there were signs that sections of the party were beginning to rethink the electoral assumptions of previous years. Heath set in train a new policy review, albeit on a more limited scale than a decade earlier.[156] Reflecting on the precipitous decline in support for both major parties, the Policy Study Group on Alienation, chaired by Kenneth Baker, began to shift the debate away from a materialistic approach towards a concern with the cultural disconnect between government and the electorate. The group, in seeking to explain an apparent sense amongst the electorate that governing institutions were not representative of the people, agreed that 'there is a political community whose standards of reference are not shared by the rest of the population'. They went on to note that 'There is a sense that politicians are a race apart with a different language and different values'.[157] Successive governments' focus on pursuing faster economic growth had not, by virtue of raising living standards, translated into public satisfaction. Indeed, the group recognised that 'The little man is now less interested in progress and more interested in security'.[158] Many of these insights were drawn from the work of the economist E. F. Schumacher, a former adviser to the National Coal Board. Schumacher depicted a Manichean division within British society between 'homecomers' and 'the people of the forward stampede'.[159] In an article for *The Observer* in June 1973, Schumacher had described how many workers spent nine to five working towards 'growth, expansion, acceleration', before returning

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[156] Campbell, *Edward Heath*, p.631.

[157] Final Report of the Policy Study Group on Alienation, 3 April 1974, CPA, ACP 3/21A. The other members of the group were Paul Dean, James Douglas, Barney Hayhoe, Timothy Raison, Nicholas Scott and Keith Speed.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid.

home to watch on the news prophecies of doom and calls for 'stabilisation, cessation of growth and slowing down'.[160] The 'people of the forward stampede' were imposing material imperatives upon a recalcitrant populace, who were frustrated with the remoteness of policymakers. Instead, they craved continuity and the conservation of their traditional way of life. Such reflections indicated that a serious reconsideration of the Conservative Party's purpose was necessary. The Policy Study Group concluded that 'The Conservative Party today needs the courage to reassert its essential task of conserving'.[161]

The Shadow Cabinet did take note of these appeals; however, their response was hardly wholehearted. In a May 1974 Shadow Cabinet meeting, Edward Heath pronounced that the Policy Study Group on Alienation had produced some interesting ideas, before adding, rather dismissively, that 'the cry of being out of touch always occurs after a period of office'.[162] After losing office amidst the turmoil of a miners' strike and a three-day week, there was a recognition that the 'mood of the people', as Lord Carrington put it, was more important than any objective reality in determining political outcomes.[163] Nevertheless, the Shadow Cabinet continued, in the short-term, to try to accommodate to public opinion. From the hung parliament, Carrington discerned that the public was 'in a coalition mood', which meant that the Conservatives ought to adopt 'national' rather than partisan policies.[164] ORC reports no doubt reinforced this conciliatory attitude, revealing the public's apparent abhorrence of 'confrontation'.[165] Moreover, having lost around a million votes to Jeremy Thorpe's Liberal Party, many Conservatives sought to devise a strategy to outflank their centrist appeal. Maurice Macmillan went as far as to resign from the

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[160] E. F. Schumacher, 'Small is Beautiful', *Observer*, 10 June 1973, p.9.
[161] Final Report of the Policy Study Group on Alienation.
[162] Minutes of the Leader's Consultative Committee, 3 May 1974, WP, WLFF 3/2/76.
[163] Minutes of the Steering Committee, 1 July 1974, WP, WLFF 3/2/76.
[164] Ibid.
[165] David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of February 1974* (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp.42-43.

Shadow Cabinet in order to campaign for a 'Government of all the Talents'.[166] Such was the desire to accommodate the public's purported aversion to partisanship that the Conservatives included in their manifesto for the October election a promise to 'invite people from outside the ranks of our party to join us in overcoming Britain's difficulties'.[167] To critics of Heath, it seemed that the Conservatives had capitulated in their attempt to implement economic reform and break the moribund postwar consensus, preferring to follow, rather than lead, a disoriented public opinion.

The reaction in the pages of *The Spectator* to Heath's 'U-turns' and appeals for national unity from 1972 onwards was predictably splenetic. Reginald Bevins, who had served as Postmaster General in the Macmillan and Douglas-Home administrations, presented himself as the authentic voice of a disillusioned Tory Party when he excoriated the 'boorish' Heath, who, being a 'great conformer', had 'got us closer to the fascist state than Mussolini ever did'.[168] As 'good men' like Powell, Maude, Ernest Marples and Duncan Sandys languished on the backbenches, Bevins lamented the ascendance of sycophantic 'lightweights who would not be allowed to grace a provincial debating society'.[169] It was a consistent theme that Heath had abandoned 'true' Conservatism in order to conciliate vested interests and apologists for the corporatist status quo. His attempt to remain in office in February 1974 by conducting negotiations with Thorpe only reinforced this impression. Patrick Cosgrave, by now deputy-editor of *The Spectator*, was incited to write an infamous article ridiculing the 'squatter in No. 10'. He encouraged the further 'humiliation' of this 'squalid nuisance' and 'ludicrous and broken figure' by forcing his resignation of the party leadership. Not only, Cosgrave argued, had Heath 'betrayed' practically every one of the Conservatives' major policies and destroyed the public's impression of the party's competence, he was also guilty of having

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[166] Campbell, *Edward Heath*, p.636.

[167] David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of October 1974* (London: Macmillan, 1975), p.68.

[168] J. R. Bevins, 'Where Have all the Good Men Gone?', *Spectator*, 3 February 1973, p.8.

[169] Ibid.

'sundered the deep and abiding association in people's minds between the Tory Party and patriotism'.[170] Whilst such hyperbolic articles no doubt reflect the immediate fury of supporters of a party that had unexpectedly lost office, they nonetheless articulated in an undisguised manner many of the themes that fed into the criticisms of a nascent New Right. Behind such ostensibly vainglorious demands for national 'leadership' was an incipient intellectual movement that sought to promote a different conception of the relationship between political leaders and the public whose support they coveted.

1.6 Conclusion

Thatcher's usurpation of Heath as leader of the Conservative Party might well be pinpointed as the end of the so-called 'political consensus'.[171] Yet, instead of thinking of this 'political consensus' purely in terms of positive policy programmes – such as Keynesian economic management and universal state welfare – it is arguably better to think of it as a negative 'consensus'. As we have seen, the Conservatives, under Heath's leadership, considered themselves to be operating within certain political constraints, which compelled them to make short-term interventions in order to sustain economic growth. These political constraints were, as Keith Middlemas recognized, founded upon certain axioms regarding the anticipated behaviour of the public.[172] Informed by the intellectual models of 1960s electoral sociology, the CRD was the nerve centre of Heath's party machine, servicing an unprecedentedly extensive policy review. In their analysis, CRD staffers like James Douglas were guided by a hypothesis that governments could manipulate the 'objective economic context of perceptions and behaviour'.[173] However, from this perspective, the Conservative Party was always swimming against the tide of a materialistic politics

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[170] Patrick Cosgrave, 'Exit the Squatter', *Spectator*, 9 March 1974, pp.1-2.

[171] Bogdanor, 'The Fall of Heath and the End of the Postwar Settlement'; Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.356.

[172] Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Vol. 2*, p.2.

[173] Butler and Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, pp.7-8.

inherently (and increasingly) favourable to the Labour Party. The Heath government's struggle to impose a compulsory prices and incomes policy only intensified this sense of working against the grain of a hostile climate of public opinion.

One might argue that the Heath government's struggles substantiated the theories of electoral sociology. Public support for the government had indeed ebbed in correlation with economic hardship. The public had indeed demonstrated their lack of deference to the Conservative government. When Heath went to the polls asking 'Who governs Britain?', the public failed to respond as he hoped, returning a hung parliament. However, it could also have been the case that these theories were, to some degree, self-fulfilling. Having constructed a popular appeal based on administrative competence and the promise of rising living standards, it is hardly surprising that support for Heath's party subsided when it no longer appeared to be delivering the goods. By 1974, it was arguably too late to change tack and suddenly revive the Conservatives' traditional appeal to popular deference and collective self-discipline.

Having observed (and inveighed against) the apparent impotence of the Heath government, a network of Conservative politicians, journalists and academics resolved to change the rules of the political game, reshaping the climate of public opinion in their favour. The next two chapters uncover how an emerging New Right advanced an alternative electoral perspective, according to which it was possible for politicians to alter popular aspirations and values. This was essentially an effort to discipline the public, entreating them to be prepared to endure economic hardship, to be self-reliant, to revere traditional values, not to sympathize with industrial militancy, and, of course, to vote Conservative. The next chapter will trace the intellectual origins and progenitors of this alternative electoral perspective, considering their critiques of the Heath years in greater depth. Margaret Thatcher, upon her accession to the party leadership, looked to these alternative intellectual authorities, or 'outriders', to challenge the pre-eminence the CRD had acquired during Heath's leadership. As she established greater authority over the party, the

Research Department 'declined into something close to oblivion'.[174] The department's merger into the Conservative Central Office premises at Smith Square in 1979, amounted, in Middlemas's words, to a 'Babylonian captivity'.[175] Indeed, the CRD's subsequent, more limited, remit, to provide policy advice to Conservative parliamentary candidates, arguably approximated to little more than a secretarial role.[176] The electoral perspective of the New Right derived from more eclectic and irregular intellectual sources.

Although factional political manoeuvres did play a substantial role, the downgrading of the CRD was, in a broader sense, a corollary of the 'backlash' in Conservative circles against the form of expertise to which the department had deferred to over the previous decade or more.[177] Matthew Grimley has highlighted the fears of 'Thatcherites', especially Keith Joseph, that sociology departments in British universities had become havens for left-wing political activists.[178] Yet, as we shall see, the hostility of the emerging New Right towards those academic disciplines went deeper than mere suspicions of political partisanship. The experience of the Heath years eroded the optimism, evident in the 1960s, that it would be possible to establish a rationally informed technical mastery over economic and social affairs. By the mid-1970s, British political science literature was dominated by discussions of the problems of 'ungovernability' and governmental 'overload'.[179] Successive governments were deemed guilty of having raised popular expectations of the capacity of the state to sustain rising popular living standards to unrealistic levels. In future, therefore, it would be necessary for politicians not only to rethink their

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[174] Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Vol. 3*, p.195.

[175] Ibid., p.400.

[176] Ramsden, *Making of Conservative Party Policy*, p.311.

[177] Matthew Grimley, '"You Got an Ology?": The Backlash Against Sociology in Britain, c.1945-90', in Lawrence Goldman (ed.), *Welfare and Social Policy in Britain Since 1870: Essays in Honour of José Harris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.178-93.

[178] Ibid., pp.189-90.

[179] Anthony King, 'Overload: Problems of Governing in the 1970s', *Political Studies* 23 (1975), pp.284-96. See also Samuel Brittan, 'The Economic Consequences of Democracy', *British Journal of Political Science* 5 (1975), pp.129-59; Robert Moss, *The Collapse of Democracy* (London: Temple Smith, 1975).

approach to economic management, but also to reconsider the means by which they generated popular support for their party. Technocratic administrative proficiency no longer appeared to be a feasible solution to the electoral dilemmas of the Conservative Party. Consequently, those who had critiqued the deterministic assumptions of electoral sociology and psephology would find that demand for their ideas grew.

Chapter Two: Ideas, Language and Doctrine

Conservative politics seemed to have reached something of an impasse in the 1970s. In conditions of economic adversity and industrial unrest, Heath's technocratic approach seemed incapable of generating support for the Conservative Party and allowing it to govern effectively once in office. This impasse opened a window of opportunity to longstanding critics of Heath's approach to advance an alternative approach to Conservative leadership. It is well established that, as Leader of the Opposition, Margaret Thatcher and her close associates were voracious 'consumer[s] of ideas produced by others'.[1] However, it would be a misconception to assume that these ideas were all formulated *de novo* during the late-1970s. In this chapter, we will trace the intellectual origins of the New Right's attempt to rework the Conservative Party's 'politics of support'. Throughout Heath's decade as leader, a significant number of dissenters, who were determined to advance an alternative conception of political leadership, fired shots across the bows. Although they appeared, initially, to be isolated and disaffected voices with little hope of practical influence in Westminster, there were signs, by the time of Heath's fall from power, of coalescence into a more organized movement.

Conservative unease with Heath's leadership has been well documented in the historiography of the period. By 'cross-tabulating' data from *Hansard* division lists with tallies of MPs' public expressions of dissent, Philip Norton established that the Heath government experienced an unprecedented level of 'intra-party dissent'.[2] Indeed, the election of prominent critics of Heath, such as Edward du Cann, John

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[1] Brian Harrison, 'Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals', *Twentieth Century British History* 5 (1994), pp.206-45, at p.211.

[2] Philip Norton, *Conservative Dissidents: Dissent Within the Parliamentary Conservative Party, 1970-74* (London: Temple Smith, 1978). Norton concluded that the key 'variable' in kindling dissent was 'Heath's leadership' (p.15). See also Stuart Ball, 'The Conservative Party and the Heath Government', in Stuart Ball and Anthony Seldon (eds), *The Heath Government, 1970-1974: A Reappraisal* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman, 1996), pp.315-50.

Biffen and Nicholas Ridley to important positions within the parliamentary party in late 1972 was testament to this.[3] Given Biffen's membership of the Mont Pelerin Society and Ridley's foundation of the Selsdon Group, a free market pressure group, it is easy to characterize Conservative dissent as the reaction of neo-liberal ideologues to the frustration of their hopes for a free market revolution. Martin Holmes, for example, writes of the 'economic liberals [who] kept the flame of traditional Conservatism burning'.[4] Although Ewen Green has established that elements within the Conservative Party never fully accepted the post-war 'settlement', it would be a mistake to present the emergence of the New Right as a straightforward reversion to laissez-faire classical liberalism.[5] Neo-liberal ideas were undoubtedly a major influence on many Conservatives (and members of other parties) in this period.[6] Yet the progenitors of the New Right also drew upon a critique of mechanistic rationalism and the assumptions of contemporary political science, which they often defined in opposition to 'liberalism'. As Peter Hennessy has noted, many in the Conservative Party seemed to regard Heath as 'a Tory version of Nye Bevan's "desiccated calculating machine"', a soulless technocrat who was blind to the moral dimension of politics.[7] It is these critiques of the *style* and approach to political leadership under Heath that have been neglected by historians, leaving us with only a partial understanding of the ideas that contributed to the reorientation of Conservative politics during the 1970s. If one traces the thought and activities of Heath's critics, one can uncover a growing network of academics and

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[3] Du Cann was elected Chairman of the 1922 Committee, Biffen as Chairman of the Industrial Committee and Ridley as Chairman of the Finance Committee. See Ball, 'The Conservative Party and the Heath Government', pp.342.

[4] Martin Holmes, *The Failure of the Heath Government* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p.148.

[5] See E. H. H. Green, 'Thatcherism: An Historical Perspective', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1999), pp.17-42; idem., *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.214-39; idem., *Thatcher* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), pp.34-40.

[6] Ben Jackson, 'Currents of Neo-Liberalism: British Political Ideologies and the New Right, c.1955-1979', *English Historical Review* 131 (2016), pp.823-50.

[7] Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.348.

journalists dedicated to the promotion of an entirely different approach to Conservative politics.

Ewen Green's account of the emergence of 'Thatcherism' as being 'firmly grounded in a liberal-market critique of Labour's post-war reforms' misses the extent to which the British New Right, of which Thatcher was part, grew out of a reaction against the domination of British politics by what Angus Maude, one of the most prominent critics of Heath within the Conservative Party, termed 'the material calculus'.[8] Much like the New Left, the early New Right sought to reassert the centrality of morality and culture to political life, renouncing the rationalistic intellectual frameworks of mid-twentieth century in favour of a more relativistic stance, stressing the autonomy and malleability of British culture. If this strand of Conservative thought possessed an intellectual nerve centre, then it was not Chicago or Vienna, but Peterhouse, Cambridge. Conservative academics, such as the historian Maurice Cowling and the philosopher Roger Scruton, have often been regarded as eccentric reactionaries, railing impotently against the progressive liberalization of social ethics. Given that many studies of 'Thatcherism' approach the subject largely through the lens of neo-liberalism, historians have either ignored the influence of these thinkers, or have struggled to integrate them into their narratives.[9] Yet, while neo-liberal thought might have come to dominate later in the 1980s, the philosophy of the 'Peterhouse School' arguably played just as large a role in the political movement that won power in 1979. The latter's focus on the centrality of political language and culture would eventually translate into a public relations strategy that attempted to rewrite the rules of British politics.

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[8] Green, 'Thatcherism: An Historical Perspective', p.22. See also Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable* and Holmes, *The Failure of the Heath Government.*

[9] See for example See for example Mark Garnett and Kevin Hickson, *Conservative Thinkers: The Key Contributors to the Political Thought of the Modern Conservative Party* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), and Mark Hayes, *The New Right in Britain: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (London: Pluto, 1994) who siphon these thinkers off under the sub-heading of 'traditionalists' and 'neo-conservatives' respectively.

2.1 The Reaction Against the Politics of Technique

In January 1966, Angus Maude, the Conservatives' spokesman on colonial affairs, was dismissed peremptorily from the shadow frontbench after launching an astonishing critique of the party leadership's approach in *The Spectator*. This marked the culmination of a decade of frustration for Maude. In spite of having been considered a rising star in the party, founding the One Nation Group alongside Heath, Iain Macleod and Enoch Powell in the early 1950s, he was, perhaps as a result of his acerbic personality, repeatedly overlooked for promotion.[10] This did mean, however, that, apart from a spell as editor-in-chief of the *Sydney Morning Herald* (1958-1961), Maude was able to dedicate himself to intellectual pursuits, publishing a series of studies of the Conservatives' support base.[11] Although he initially seemed to accept that voters were 'likely to take an increasingly empirical view of politics in the future', Maude later came to view this as a malign tendency, becoming a fervent critic of materialistic conceptions of politics.[12] Opening his 1966 assault on the leadership with a declaration that 'It is obvious that the Conservative party has completely lost effective political initiative', he went on to imply that, unlike Baldwin, Churchill and Macmillan, Heath lacked an 'instinctive identification with the national ethos'.[13] The Conservatives had resorted to competing with Labour's 'government by gimmick and promise', their support becoming dependent upon their capacity to furnish greater material rewards than their opponents.[14] This 'superficial

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[10] Mark Garnett, 'Maude, Angus Edmund Upton, Baron Maude of Stratford upon Avon (1912–1993)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2007 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/44629, accessed 15 March 2017].

[11] See for example Angus Maude, 'The Conservative Party and the Changing Class Structure', *The Political Quarterly* 24 (1953), pp.139-47.

[12] Maude, 'Conservative Party and the Changing Class Structure', p.147. In spite of his belief at this time that voters were likely to be increasingly motivated by material concerns, he did not assume that this was a reflection of their objective material interests. Rather, he defined 'social class' in cultural terms as 'a group of persons conscious of certain common traits and of a certain way of behaviour which distinguishes them from members of other social classes with other traits and other ways of behaviour' (p.139).

[13] Angus Maude, 'Winter of Tory Discontent', *The Spectator*, 14 January 1966, p.11.

[14] Ibid.

and materialistic' conception of human nature, which seemed to reign supreme in the politics of the Wilson era, would continue, in Maude's eyes, as long as the debate continued to be conducted in superficial and materialistic terms.[15]

It was this critique of the *style* and language of Heath's technocratic politics, rather than proto-monetarist arguments against wage control and tripartism that dominated during the late 1960s. The latter, whilst often logically proceeding from the former, were not the starting point of the British New Right's thought. Nigel Lawson, later to be one of the most prominent advocates of monetarist economics, was still thinking along what he considered to be 'sound Keynesian lines' during his period as editor of *The Spectator* (1966-1970).[16] He accepted that the state had a duty to intervene in economic affairs in order to maintain full employment and 'iron out' fluctuations in the trade cycle, describing Manchester School liberalism as 'plainly inadequate' in the context of a modern economy dominated by monopolistic corporations.[17] Nevertheless, Lawson did echo Maude's criticisms of the Conservative leadership's technocratic style of politics, accusing them of having 'abdicated from any attempt to control events'.[18] Without having formulated an alternative, Lawson consistently argued for the Conservatives to question the 'Whitehall-centred conventional wisdom' of politics, arguing that without doing so it would be impossible to practise the effective politics of opposition. One should be wary therefore of assuming any automatic causal relationship between politicians' particular policy preferences and their support or opposition to their party leadership. Heath's critics' discontent did not arise solely out of their unease with particular policies adopted under his leadership; rather, they questioned his entire conception of the nature of political leadership.

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Nigel Lawson, 'An Alternative Economic Policy', *The Spectator*, 24 February 1967, p.6.

[17] Ibid. Lawson was echoing arguments made by John Kenneth Galbraith in *The New Industrial State* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957) that the competitive market had been superseded as the primary determinant of prices and production by the ability of 'oligopolic' corporations to control demand.

[18] Ibid.

Following his dismissal, Maude sought to expand upon his critique of the Conservative leadership and furnish it with an intellectual grounding. In a long and rambling philosophical treatise, which he titled *The Common Problem* (1969), Maude railed against what he deemed to be the chief malign influence in British political life, the politics of 'technique', which had established itself as the hegemonic consensus of the political establishment.[19] The 'politics of consensus' that he excoriated was not yet conceived primarily as a set of policy prescriptions, for instance Keynesian economic policies and the extension of the welfare state; rather, Maude described it as 'the primacy of economics' and the belief that prosperity will *of itself* ensure the good life.[20] He alleged that the Conservatives were guilty of preaching from the 'science-cum-technology gospel' of Harold Wilson in a doomed attempt to capture a chimerical 'middle ground'.[21] This prevailing technocratic philosophy went unchallenged, according to Maude, as 'party machines' concealed internecine disputes. Those 'progressive' politicians who called for an 'end to party strife' were, in Maude's mind, 'crypto-fascists' hiding behind a 'superficial reasonableness'. These 'Pharisees of politics' were judged to be guilty of suppressing political debate. Indeed, Maude declared that their 'ideal system would be government by political eunuchs'.[22] As a result, British politics had come to be dominated by 'the material calculus', such that the vote had become something used to secure material benefit rather than to express a view on the country's future.[23] Lord Coleraine (Richard Law) echoed many of Maude's arguments in *For Conservatives Only* (1970). He pinpointed the development of psephology as a malign influence, which fostered the assumption that the electorate divided into three

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[19] Angus Maude, *The Common Problem* (London: Constable, 1969), p.221.

[20] Ibid., pp.273-74.

[21] Ibid., p.243.

[22] Ibid., pp.277-78. Maude foreshadowed Margaret Thatcher's later rhetoric when he remarked that 'Their ideal statesman is one who sees both sides of every question and never gets to the heart of the matter at all'.

[23] Ibid., p.222.

blocs, including an all-important 'middle ground'.[24] This 'Eldorado of the psephologist' was assumed, according to Coleraine, to be composed of fundamentally anti-Conservative voters, rather than disillusioned party stalwarts.[25] Deference to the perceived (material) desires of the 'floating voter' was felt to have divested the Conservatives' politics of any coherent philosophy. If anything they were floating with the tide influenced by their socialist opponents, 'like a man caught up in another man's dream'.[26]

For Maude and Coleraine, the Conservatives were guilty both of disregarding the need for a moral philosophy in politics and, as a result, losing their identification with the national ethos. This could be traced back, according to Coleraine, to the leadership of Harold Macmillan, whom he deemed to be afflicted with a 'strange obtuseness and insensitivity to the true nature of the world about him'.[27] Likewise, Maude felt that Macmillan's administrations lacked any ideas of 'a political nature', drifting into 'the nihilism of social psychology'.[28] This philosophical vacuum had apparently permitted a positivistic 'vulgarisation of Marxism', with its 'scientific' pursuit of absolute truth, to dominate political thinking in Britain.[29] He traced this pattern of thought back to the advent of liberal rationalism, inculpating John Locke for devising the 'labour theory of value' and Adam Smith for his abstraction of the 'interests of society as a whole'.[30] The latter fostered a mindset in which the state believed it could act upon the general will by intervening in the interests of an

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[24] Lord Coleraine, *For Conservatives Only* (London: Tom Stacey, 1970), p.65.

[25] Ibid., p.76. On the Conservatives' lack of faith in the solidity of their electoral base during the postwar years, see E. H. H. Green, 'The Conservative Party, the State and the Electorate, 1945-64', in Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor (eds), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1997), pp.176-200.

[26] Ibid., p.118.

[27] Ibid., pp.110-11.

[28] Maude, *The Common Problem*, p.52.

[29] Ibid., pp.26-27.

[30] Ibid., pp.31-2, 37-9. Maude again pre-empted Thatcher when he declared that society 'does not exist' (p.41). Like Thatcher he was criticizing the tendency to treat 'society' as coterminous with the state. He conceived of 'society' as 'the corpus of tradition and experience', which provides 'the framework within which [individual men and women's] reason is exercised', a very different conception, in his mind, to the 'abstract construct of statisticians' (p.104).

abstraction of 'society'. Hence, the individual had come to be subordinate to the 'social image', reduced to social conformism by a state that continually increased the range and potency of social determinants in an attempt to scientifically govern their workings. Theories of social determinism were thus self-fulfilling.

Maude's arguments that the extension of state intervention in social and economic affairs ('technique') possessed a conditioning effect on the individual were, ironically, drawn largely from the ideas of left-leaning thinkers. He drew upon J. K. Galbraith's arguments that large-scale production and demand management sought the elimination of unpredictability, employing the media to fabricate conditions of demand.[31] This tied in nicely with the work of the French sociologist and anarchist Jacques Ellul, who advanced an apocalyptic thesis regarding the danger of the diffusion of 'technique' such that it came to determine all aspects of life.[32] Industrial uniformity and the tools of manipulation furnished by the mass media promised an Orwellian future, which could only be avoided by the expansion of individual choice and the conservation of idiosyncrasy. Technocracy had advanced by conditioning people to accept its terms of reference - the 'purely material calculus' – such that this consensus was faced only with an 'incoherence in protest', lacking a language and philosophy to challenge it.[33] Britain, according to Maude, therefore required a 'reawakening and reorientation of the spirit of Man', injecting philosophy and morality back into political life and liberating the country from the dictates of 'technique'.[34]

2.2 Debates in the Yorkshire Dales

In spite of the purported intellectual vacuity of the Conservative leadership during the Heath era, some within the party were considering the question of how to recast

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[31] Ibid., pp.215-217.
[32] Ibid., pp.91-3, 101-2, 217-8. Maude drew from Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965).
[33] Ibid., pp.222, 274.
[34] Ibid., p.221.

Britain's intellectual and political culture in their favour. Clarisse Berthezène's study of Bonar Law Memorial College at Ashridge demonstrated how the Conservatives sought to counter the success of the Fabian Society and its materialistic philosophy in the inter-war years, contesting a purported left-wing ascendancy in the intellectual sphere through their own attempt to 'postulate, permeate [and] perorate' Conservative notions of history and citizenship.[35] Such efforts were renewed during the 1970s at Ashridge's successor college at Lord Swinton's estate near Masham in the North Riding of Yorkshire. Lawrence Black has situated the closure of Swinton College in 1975 within the context of the rising ascendancy of middle-class southern professionals within the party, for whom retreats to country estates were unwelcome vestiges of the aristocratic style of politics they sought to disown.[36] Yet, Swinton College's fusty appearance should not be allowed to obscure the fact that, for a period, it served as an intellectual crucible in which the debates that helped shape the New Right took place. Margaret Thatcher visited the college in 1968, 1970, 1972 and 1974, meeting men like T. E. Utley, Enoch Powell and the Cambridge historian George Kitson Clark.[37] In fact, as we shall see, Swinton College's aristocratic ethos and its commitment to political education were not simply nostalgic vestiges of a lost world of Conservatism. They were, in many respects, very much in tune with the agenda of those Conservatives who advocated a decisive departure from the style of politics that had prevailed under Heath. The discussions and publications of Swinton College perhaps represent an under-studied window into the emergence of the New Right from within the British political sphere and the means by which intellectuals exercised influence over frontline politicians.

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[35] Clarisse Berthezène, 'Creating Conservative Fabians: The Conservative Party, Political Education and the Founding of Ashridge College', *Past and Present* 182 (February 2004), pp.211-40, at p.219. See also Gary Love, 'The Periodical Press and the Intellectual Culture of Conservatism In Interwar Britain', *Historical Journal* 57:4 (2014), pp.1027-56 on the Conservatives' attempt to counter the influence of the left-wing periodical and pamphlet press.

[36] Lawrence Black, 'Tories and Hunters: Swinton College and the Landscape of Modern Conservatism', *History Workshop Journal* 77 (2013), pp.187-214.

[37] Ibid., p.200. Black notes the preponderance of Cambridge graduates and fellows, particularly historians, amongst the tutorial staff.

Swinton College operated as the training school of the Conservative Political Centre, a semi-independent body within the party structure. Its founders, Cuthbert Alport and Rab Butler, hoped that it would become 'a kind of Conservative Fabian Society'.[38] Although the college operated under the purview of Conservative Central Office, by no means all of the attendees of the College were supine supporters of the party establishment during the Heath years. An article by the Hungarian émigré historian Tibor Szamuely[39] in the *Swinton Journal* in Spring 1968, lambasting the ascendancy of the 'smelly little orthodoxies' of 'progressivism' and calling for the Conservatives to 'offer an intellectually based and firmly stated alternative to every ideological tenet of the "progressive" socialist creed', sparked an impassioned debate at the College, culminating in the convening of a symposium that summer.[40] Although some participants, including David Howell and Michael Spicer, recoiled from Szamuely's call for greater intellectual input into Conservative policy-making, others, in particular Geoffrey Howe, Angus Maude and T. E. Utley, welcomed his appeal to recast British political discourse.[41] Howe argued that the Conservatives must challenge the fallacy that the pursuit of 'equality' should be the ultimate end of all government policy, anticipating the arguments of Alfred Sherman and Keith

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[38] Philip Norton, 'The Role of the Conservative Political Centre, 1945-98', in Stuart Ball and Ian Holliday (eds), *Mass Conservatism: The Conservatives and the Public since the 1880s* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp.183-200.

[39] Szamuely, a former member of the Allied Control Commission for Hungary (and possibly of the NKVD) spent eighteen months in prison, accused of collusion with the United States. Following his release, he taught history in Budapest, Winneba and Reading. While in England, he established himself as a critic of the Soviet Union, writing for *The Spectator*. He died of cancer, aged just forty-seven, in 1972. See Lord Thomas of Swynnerton (Hugh Thomas), 'Szamuely, Tibor (1925-1972)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Sept 2004 [https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-31745, accessed 4 May 2020].

[40] Tibor Szamuely, 'Intellectuals and Conservatism', *Swinton Journal* (Spring 1968), pp.5-16.

[41] 'Intellectuals and Conservatism: A Symposium', *Swinton Journal* (Summer 1968). It is difficult to discern a clear-cut division between Heathite 'One Nation' Conservatives and proto-Thatcherites at the symposium. Many participants propounded contradictory views. David Howell, for example, professed his admiration for Enoch Powell's intellectual radicalism, but was wary of a 'craving for philosophy', arguing the party should focus instead on establishing detailed policy proposals for decentralization.

Joseph in the following decade.[42] Even Timothy Raison, a man of the Tory left, noted the feeling of 'relief' amongst the public when they heard figures like Alf Garnett and Enoch Powell, which indicated that the prevailing consensus in political debate, an outgrowth of a 'surfeit of Raymond Williams and Marshall Macluhan [*sic*]', could be fractured.[43] 'Consensus', in this context, appears to have been understood as the intellectual constraints imposed by the prevailing discourse of political life in Britain. What Szamuely termed the 'natural mental habitat' of opinion leaders, was, in his mind, saturated with permissive and positivistic assumptions, ensuring that left-wing ideas prevailed regardless of who was in government. The only means to change this would be to change the terms of the debate.

Indeed, the language of politics was nothing short of a preoccupation for many of the contributors to the *Swinton Journal*. Enoch Powell wrote a lengthy article deconstructing the contemporary use of the term 'social'. Whereas he took the word to mean 'concerned with the living together of human beings', he suggested that in contemporary usage it had come to be synonymous with 'redistributive'. Moreover, what contemporary political discourse designated as 'social problems' were in reality results of the inevitable conflict between habitual practice and organic environmental change, which could be best absorbed within a flexible free market society. Social conflicts were not necessarily 'social problems' demanding a governmental response.[44] Like Powell, other contributors to the journal were concerned with the 'impulses and moods' of society, turning their attention away from material questions of economic management and towards what Robert

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[42] Ibid., pp.13-15. See for example Keith Joseph, 'Equality: The Case Against: THIS BRITAIN', *Observer*, 22 August 1976, p.8; Keith Joseph and Jonathan Sumption, *Equality* (Chatham: W. & J. Mackay Ltd, 1979).

[43] Ibid, pp.20-21. Raison nevertheless professed his unease at the prospect of an ideological Conservatism.

[44] J. Enoch Powell, 'Conservatism and social problems', *Swinton Journal* (Autumn 1968), pp.8-15.

Jackson[45] termed 'the politics of transcendence', acknowledging the formative role of knowledge and consciousness in transforming social and economic life.[46] In doing so, these Conservative thinkers drew *explicitly* upon the ideas of the New Left in detaching individual subjectivity from material determination. Jackson invoked Hebert Marcuse and György Lukács as thinkers who repudiated Friedrich Engels' preoccupation with 'sub-structural' forces by turning their attention to the role of consciousness and subjectivity in moulding human behaviour.[47] While they did not share the values of what Jackson called the social 'tissue' of the New Left – which he depicted as a motley band of radicals, students and drug addicts – many contributors accepted contemporary New Left theories about the diffusion of ideas and culture.[48] Given that the values of the New Left were deemed to be those of an atypical minority, contributors to the journal suggested that a real opportunity existed to advance a genuine popular Conservatism that transcended crude material self-interest.

In fact, echoing the concerns of Angus Maude, much of the output of the *Swinton Journal* was dedicated to contesting contemporary understandings of voter behaviour in the social and political sciences, which conceived of political decisions as instrumental responses to material interests. The autumn 1969 edition included an article by the political scientist Michael Pinto-Duschinsky that called into question the theoretical perspectives of three influential recent works of political sociology.[49]

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[45] Robert Jackson was, at this time, a fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. He would go on to be elected as a Conservative MEP (1979-83) and then MP for Wantage (1983-2005). In January 2005, he defected to the Labour Party. 'Robert Jackson MA', [https://www.asc.ox.ac.uk/person/205, accessed 4 May 2020].

[46] Robert Jackson, 'The Political Ideas of the New Left in the 1970s', *Swinton Journal* (Summer 1972), pp.39-51.

[47] Ibid., p.42.

[48] Ibid., p.41.

[49] Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, 'Book Reviews: Is Working Class Conservatism Doomed?', *Swinton Journal* (Autumn 1969), pp.32-35. The works reviewed were John H. Goldthorpe et al., *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Robert McKenzie and Allan Silver, *Angels in Marble: Working Class Conservatives in Urban England* (London:

Robert McKenzie and Allan Silver's *Angels in Marble* (1968) contended that, with
the decline of deferential Conservative voting amongst the working classes, an
increasing proportion of voters saw their political choice in instrumental terms,
voting for the party they deemed to most effectively promote their material interests.
John Goldthorpe et al.'s *Affluent Worker* study likewise set its stall against
impressionistic studies, such as that of Ferdynand Zweig, which postulated that a
process of cultural *embourgeoisement* was taking place in the post-war years.[50]
Goldthorpe et al. seemed to conceive of class identity as being an epiphenomenon of
one's occupational status. However, Pinto-Duschinsky suggested that the results of
Goldthorpe et al.'s survey, as well as the results of David Butler and Donald Stokes's
contemporaneous study, might have been systematically flawed, conflating a
temporary reaction against the Conservatives at the time of the Profumo affair with a
structural predisposition amongst working-class voters to support the Labour Party.[51]
Contesting the latent reductionism of these studies, contributors to the *Swinton
Journal* were inclined to take what one might now term the 'cultural turn'. The
surprise results of the 1970 election led David Clarke to question the reliability of
opinion polling and quantitative methodologies of political analysis, suggesting that
'The mood of the country, in the long run, is the most important single factor in
politics'.[52] In the same edition, Richard Lynn suggested the discipline of psychology
might provide greater insights into political behaviour, noting the correlation
between certain social attitudes and behaviours and political predispositions.
Conservatives were likely to be people contented with England as it was, whereas
socialists were more likely to attend 'pyjama parties' (presumably this was

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Heinemann Educational, 1968) and David Butler and Donald E. Stokes, *Political Change in Britain:
Forces Shaping Electoral Choice* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1969).

[50] Ferdynand Zweig, *The Worker in an Affluent Society* (London: Heinemann, 1961). Zweig was later
an important interlocutor of the New Right, publishing *The New Acquisitive Society* (Chichester: Rose
for the Centre for Policy Studies) under the auspices of the Centre for Policy Studies.

[51] Pinto-Duschinsky, 'Is Working Class Conservatism Doomed?', pp.33-4.

[52] David C. Clarke, 'Editorial: After the Election', *Swinton Journal* (Autumn 1970), pp.4-8.

considered to be a measure of permissive or bohemian values).[53] Such articles are indicative of a growing reaction against objectivism and determinism amongst many Conservative thinkers in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

2.3 A 'New Right'?

Whilst the likes of Maude and Szamuely might have appeared ostensibly to be isolated eccentrics, they were not simply whistling in the wind. In describing Maude as a 'lonely Conservative voice in the late 1960s', Matthew Grimley overlooks the fact that voices like Maude's were beginning to coalesce into a network of conservative intellectuals who reiterated similar critiques of Heath's technocratic style of politics.[54] Szamuely's invective against the leadership reverberated through the pages of *The Spectator* in 1968. Patrick Cosgrave, for instance, endorsed the thrust of Szamuely's argument, contending that the Conservative Party was most effective when it 'testifies to some things deeply and firmly embedded in the national consciousness'.[55] Heath's programmatic approach, which exhibited a 'defensiveness in the face of Labour propaganda', coupled with his inability to understand that a political party was a 'repository of moral impulse that transcends interest', had meant that the party was left emphasizing the economics of capitalism, their sense of morality having 'withered away'.[56] The starting point of his critique was therefore far from the economistic preoccupations of neo-liberalism. In the same magazine, the historian Maurice Cowling also reflected on Szamuely's article in the *Swinton Journal*. Although he ridiculed any idea of a Conservative doctrine, reflecting his belief that 'a doctrinal party is almost a contradiction in terms', he recommended that Heath's Conservatives adopted 'a style, a manner of speaking, a tone of voice' to

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[53] Richard Lynn, 'Psychology and Politics' *Swinton Journal* (Autumn 1970), pp.20-4.

[54] Matthew Grimley, 'Thatcherism, Morality and Religion', in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds), *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.78-94, at p.82. Although Grimley does recognize that the critique gained greater purchase after 1974.

[55] Patrick Cosgrave, 'The Stupid Party', *The Spectator*, 19 December 1968, p.3.

[56] Ibid.

transform the political climate.[57] Clearly, it was a common theme propagated by Conservatives discontented with the leadership of the party under Heath that the terms of the political game were rigged in Labour's favour. Given that British political discourse was, according to Cowling, saturated with the language of protest and permissivism - 'the mindless slogans of empty minds' - it was only natural that a conservative party would find it difficult to appeal to voters.[58] Cowling wrote admiringly (albeit cynically) of the political skill of Harold Wilson, a man who, without giving the impression of believing in the nonsense he peddled, employed slogans and rhetoric as tools for his own and his party's political advancement.[59] In contrast, Heath, preoccupied with technocratic concerns, seemed either oblivious to the necessity of employing political rhetoric strategically, or incapable of doing so. Thus, by late 1968, the phalanx of conservative critics of Heath was widening.

T.E. (Peter) Utley was one conservative thinker whose influence extended beyond the journalistic sphere as he established contacts with Conservative politicians as well as university academics. Blind since childhood, Utley nevertheless established himself as the most philosophical of conservative journalists, becoming a leader writer for *The Daily Telegraph* after spells at *The Times*, *The Observer*, and *The Spectator*.[60] As well as participating in internal party debates, such as those at Swinton College, Utley also played a central role in propagating critiques of Heath through the conservative press. Like Angus Maude, Utley professed distaste for those who treated politics as if it were a scientific exercise, falling prey to a materialistic 'social philosophy' similar to that of Anthony Crosland. He argued that too many of the 'expert' advisers employed by Heath on bodies like the Central

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[57] Maurice Cowling, 'Intellectuals and the Tory Party', *The Spectator*, 8 March 1968, p.292.

[58] Maurice Cowling, 'There's Been a Revolution Here, Too', *The Spectator,* 23 May 1968, p.9.

[59] Ibid.

[60] See J. Enoch Powell, 'Utley, Thomas Edwin (1921–1988)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2013 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40168, accessed 15 May 2017]; Julia Stapleton, 'T. E. Utley and the Renewal of Conservatism in Post-War Britain', *Journal of Political Ideologies* (2014), pp.1-20.

Policy Review Staff (CPRS) wore 'the compulsory pink of the academic establishment'.[61] Moreover, he bemoaned the fact that the 'Disraelian brand of romantic Tory idealism' was no longer being transmitted to the young; instead, the Young Conservatives and Federation of Conservative Students seemed to have become vanguards for a form of permissive libertarianism.[62] Unsurprisingly he described himself as 'one of the most constant of [Angus Maude's] admirers', his own analysis of the Conservative Party's predicament being strikingly similar to Maude's.[63] Nevertheless, he found Maude's *The Common Problem* 'profoundly disappointing'. Its 'diffuse and repetitive' narrative, including a long digression into astrological reflections, and its 'obscure' language meant that the persuasive impact of Maude's appeal was blunted. According to Utley, Maude ignored 'the truth that the language of politics…is a language of exaggeration'.[64] Instead of moderating his calls for a diminution of state intervention in the economy with a consideration of when ad hoc intervention might be necessary, Utley felt Maude ought to have concentrated his fire on the corporatist state. Conservatives needed to establish a powerful and coherent rhetorical appeal rather an assortment of carefully balanced policy prescriptions. Utley declared himself 'prepared to wait to write in the qualifying clauses to laisser-faire economics until there is something to be qualified'.[65] In his mind, critics of the status quo in Conservative politics ought to conceal philosophical deliberations as to the relationship between liberalism and conservatism behind a united front of opposition to technocratic politics.

Such deliberations played an integral role in the rethinking of Conservative politics amongst a small group of conservative intellectuals. Although considerable attention has been accorded to neo-liberal academics from overseas as the reputed progenitors of the New Right, the generation of British Conservatives who came of

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[61] T. E. Utley, 'Planning or Freedom First?', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 January 1967, p.16.
[62] T. E. Utley, 'How Tory are Young Tories?', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 September 1969, p.18.
[63] T. E. Utley, 'Tory Balancing Act', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 July 1969, p.11.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

age in the 1970s and 1980s arguably owed more to native traditions of Conservative thought in their intellectual formation. According to Richard Cockett, John Casey at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge and Maurice Cowling at Peterhouse, served as mentors to a 'rising generation of young Conservatives'.[66] Along with figures such as Roger Scruton, Michael Oakeshott, Peter Utley and Shirley Letwin, these Conservative thinkers organised themselves into the Conservative Philosophy Group (CPG) in 1973 and the Salisbury Group in 1976, seeking to infuse their thought into the party at Westminster. Many journalists in the late 1970s discerned the latent influence of a 'Peterhouse School' in the transformation of the Conservative Party's political approach. Alan Watkins, for example, writing in *The Observer* in November 1977, traced the school back to Herbert Butterfield, during whose mastership a generation of historians and journalists was nurtured.[67] Whilst many of the depictions of the 'Peterhouse School' in these articles as a conspiratorial network were certainly overdrawn, it is clear that the oldest college at Cambridge was at the heart of a developing strand of intellectual conservatism.

In spite of the radical, anti-establishment connotations that the concept of 'Thatcherism' has acquired, many of its antecedents can be located in the thought of these traditionalist, 'High Tory' thinkers. Brian Harrison has written suggestively of the wide range of intellectual connections Margaret Thatcher made during her period as Leader of the Opposition, notably convening at the 'intellectual bazaar' of the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS).[68] Yet, when discussing the formation of the CPG and the Salisbury Group, he is dismissive of their import, pronouncing that their ideas were 'too academic for practical impact'.[69] In all fairness, Harrison's interpretation merely corroborates Maurice Cowling's own disavowal of any influence the 'Peterhouse Right' might have been said to hold over the Conservative

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[66] Richard Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution 1931-1983* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p.218.

[67] Alan Watkins, 'The Peterhouse Connection', *Observer*, 27 November 1977, p.40.

[68] Harrison, 'Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals', p.215.

[69] Ibid., p.209.

Party leadership. In a letter to the *The Times* in 1984, Cowling declared that he did not believe that the likes of John Casey, Roger Scruton, Edward Norman and himself 'ever had the slightest influence over Mrs Thatcher's policies'.[70] However, one might suspect that Cowling's disavowal owed much to his ambivalence towards the record of the Thatcher governments and what he described as their 'low-level, Neville Chamberlain-like conception of the spiritual glue' that connected the Conservative Party to the British public.[71] Yet, if one does not take Cowling's rancorous proclamations at face value, one can trace clear links between the thought of the 'Peterhouse Right' and their journalistic associates and the altered approach to public relations that played such a central role in the New Right's accession to power.

Indeed, in his preface to the second of edition of *Mill and Liberalism* (1990), Cowling somewhat contradicted his claim that the Peterhouse School possessed no weight in the transformation of Conservative Party politics. He credited a 'journalistic transformation', wrought by those who were educated under the shadow of Butterfield and Oakeshott (who might be considered an honorary Peterhouse man), with easing Margaret Thatcher's way in winning over the thinking classes, intellectually legitimizing her challenge to consensus politics.[72] Under the editorship of Maurice Green and the deputy editorship of Colin Welch, *The Daily Telegraph* provided a mouthpiece for critics of Edward Heath's technocratic approach to politics. Welch, Peregrine Worsthorne, George Gale and Patrick Cosgrave had all studied under Herbert Butterfield at Cambridge, endowing them with a suspicion of the liberal and materialist assumptions of postwar politics.[73] Cosgrave, a virulent critic of Heath during his time at *The Spectator*, later became a close advisor to Thatcher. Such voices provided a powerful counterweight to the conventional

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[70] Letter from Maurice Cowling, 'Measuring the Drift', *The Times*, 4 February 1984, p.9.

[71] Maurice Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.xlii.

[72] Ibid., p.xxxiv.

[73] Alan Watkins, 'The Peterhouse Connection', *Observer,* 27 November 1977, p.40.

assumptions that voter behaviour was determined by the government's success in maintaining rising living standards. Rather, they professed a belief in the autonomy of the political sphere from material dictates. The role of the politician, in Cowling's mind, was 'calling belief up, relating it to the requirements of situations and creating further belief in their turn'.[74] He regarded the economic liberalism and libertarian rhetoric of the Conservatives not as the *sine qua non* of Thatcherism, but as an instrumental means of endowing intellectual legitimacy to the traditional Tory ends of preserving social authority and inequality.[75] Indeed, in spite of his cynical outlook, Cowling, like other members of the Peterhouse School, attributed a central role to 'eloquence' in the art of politics.[76] This methodological anti-positivism, in inspiring scorn for the inarticulate, technocratic political approach of Edward Heath, made the Peterhouse School important intellectual allies for the nascent New Right during the 1970s.

However, the influence of these thinkers in the inception of the New Right has often been obscured in the historiography by a preoccupation with the influence of free market economists and neo-liberal academics. Indeed, in 1990 Cowling highlighted this neglect of the non-economic New Right, attributing it to the framing of the concepts of 'Thatcherism' and the New Right by neo-Marxist political scientists and sociologists.[77] For Stuart Hall of *Marxism Today*, Thatcherite 'authoritarian populism' was an expression of 'petty-bourgeois ideology', attempting to generate popular support for free market capitalism.[78] Along with Martin Jacques, Hall defined the new 'rightism' that emerged during the 1970s as the last throw of the dice of the ruling class in the face of an intractable crisis of capital accumulation and the inability of the 'modernist' project of postwar governments to effectively

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[74] Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, p.xliii.
[75] Ibid., p.xxviii.
[76] Ibid., p.xliii.
[77] Ibid., pp.xvi, xxv. He specifically inculpated Andrew Gamble, Martin Jacques and Stuart Hall.
[78] Stuart Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show', *Marxism Today* (January 1979), pp.14-20, at pp.14-15.

discipline the working class.[79] While Cowling agreed that the cardinal purpose of preserving existing class relations underlay 'Thatcherite' rhetoric, he dissented from the hypothesis that this 'concealed consciousness' was materially determined.[80] Cultural, religious and 'high political' concerns were at least as important as economic self-interest in motivating their actions.[81] Hence, given that the New Right was not, from Cowling's perspective, a novel by-product of a structural economic crisis, he was led to wonder whether the term 'New Right' might in fact be a misnomer.[82] Its intellectual influences possessed a long and diffuse genealogy, which could be traced back to the days of Butterfield and Oakeshott. Cowling delineated five broad and overlapping movements that coalesced into the New Right: the reaction against corporatism; the parliamentary and party movements in support of Enoch Powell and later Margaret Thatcher; the campaign to restore educational standards initiated by the Black Papers;[83] the anti-Heath movement amongst journalists, particularly at *The Daily Telegraph*; and the cohort of academics known as the 'Peterhouse Right'.[84] In spite of Cowling's disappointment that the New Right failed to adopt a more 'fallen' tone, akin to the 'Larkian pessimism' of Kingsley Amis, he was reasonably contented that by 1990 'the political and intellectual climate' had moved in the direction he had hoped back in 1963.[85] It thus follows that

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[79] Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (eds), *The Politics of Thatcherism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983), pp.4. See also Andrew Gamble, *The Conservative Nation* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), esp. introduction; idem. *The Free Economy and the Strong State: The Politics of Thatcherism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).

[80] Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, p.xxviii; idem, 'The Present Position' in Maurice Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays* (London: Cassell, 1978), pp.1-24, at p.9.

[81] Shirley Letwin advanced a similar argument in *The Anatomy of Thatcherism* (London: Fontana, 1992), claiming that 'Thatcherism' was founded not upon *laissez-faire* liberalism, but upon a moral conception of 'vigorous virtues'.

[82] Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, p.xxxii.

[83] C. B. Cox and A. E. Dyson (eds), *Fight for Education: A Black Paper* (London: Critical Quarterly Society, 1968); idem. *Black Paper Two: The Crisis in Education* (London: Critical Quarterly Society, 1969). The success of the Black Papers led the former Labour councillor turned Conservative MP, Dr Rhodes Boyson, to establish the Constitutional Book Club which published a series of polemical pamphlets arguing against various aspects of postwar politics.

[84] Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, p.xviii.

[85] Cowling, 'The Present Position', p.15; idem., *Mill and Liberalism*, pp.xvi, xl.

if one seeks an insight into the intellectual thought of the New Right, one should turn one's attention to the loosely connected group of 'about fifty people' that Cowling suggested constituted the movement.[86]

2.4 Conservative Philosophy

In spite of Cowling's distaste for academic writing designed to fulfil 'the practical function', the scholars and journalists who participated in the Conservative Philosophy Group and the Salisbury Group did begin to coordinate their efforts to the extent that they might be today described as a pressure group.[87] When accused of seeking, through the publication of the edited collection *Conservative Essays* (1978), to foist a doctrine upon Mrs Thatcher, Maurice Cowling published a 'disavowal' in *The Spectator*, arguing that he was merely seeking 'to suggest a language in which Conservatives might think and speak'.[88] Yet, this downplaying of any significant attempt to influence the Conservative leadership was perhaps rather disingenuous on Cowling's part. While he disbelieved in the possibility of adhering to a coherent political 'doctrine' amidst the quotidian manoeuvres of 'high politics', he considered the deployment of effectively calculated political rhetoric to be the critical means by which the Conservatives could regain the ascendancy in British politics. He contended that '*Conservative Essays* is directed less at the election than at establishing a tone which will prevail whether she [Thatcher] wins or not'.[89] Thus, contrary to his reputation for exclusively privileging *histoire événementielle*, Cowling believed that, regardless of which party held office at a given time, their actions were circumscribed by the constraints imposed by the prevailing political

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[86] Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, p. xxxvi. This was presumably a conscious echo of Cowling's famous 1971 definition of the 'fifty or sixty' people who mattered in politics. Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour, 1920-1924: The Beginning of Modern British Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p.iii.

[87] Maurice Cowling, *The Nature and Limits of Political Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p.123. Cowling described 'practical' writing as 'a political casuistry by which men are enabled to see what political choices are implied by the particular prejudices they happen to maintain'.

[88] Maurice Cowling, 'Disavowal', *The Spectator*, 7 April 1978, p.17.

[89] Ibid.

discourse. Along with the other contributors to the *Conservative Essays*,[90] he encouraged an approach to politics that considered public opinion to be malleable, not structurally predetermined by objective material conditions. Out of a shared hostility to utilitarian approaches to politics and a critique of the scientific pretensions of postwar sociology and political science, these conservative thinkers pre-empted post-structuralists and new historicists in underlining the relative autonomy of the political sphere.[91]

Cowling was perhaps justified in complaining that he had become 'typecast' as reducing political history to a caricature of 'Namierite venality'.[92] Peter Clarke, for example, described his work as 'psychologically and sociologically naïve in its analysis of the role of political leaders and the forces which they seek to mobilize', claiming that he overlooked the influence of 'social structure and social consciousness' in the generation of ideology.[93] However, Cowling's riposte would be that he did not ignore the relationship between 'social structure and social consciousness' and political ideology; he simply denied that it was a one-way relationship, in which the latter logically proceeded from the former. Rather, the activities and rhetorical manipulation of the political elite were formative as well as derivative of the political attitudes of the masses. For Cowling, political activity consisted of 'a manipulation of thoughts, a juggling of slogans within a world of prejudice'. Politicians, along with journalists and academics, were able 'to impute to

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[90] Essays were contributed by Maurice Cowling, Andrew Jones and Michael Bentley, T. E. Utley, Shirley Robin Letwin, Edward Norman, John Casey, Roger Scruton, Kenneth Minogue, Richard Griffiths, Peregrine Worsthorne, John Biffen MP, John Peyton MP, and George Gale.

[91] Susan Pedersen has noted that, in the field of historical study, the 'new' political history and 'linguistic turn', subsequent to works like Gareth Stedman Jones's *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 'have essentially brought [Cowling's] opponents to his door'. Susan Pedersen, 'What is Political History Now?', in David Cannadine (ed.), *What is History Now?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.36-56, at p.40.

[92] Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, p.xv.

[93] Peter Clarke, 'Ideas and Interests', in Theodore K. Rabb and Robert I Rotberg (eds), *The New History: The 1980s and Beyond: Studies in Interdisciplinary History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1982), pp.45-9, at p.47.

a set of arbitrary slogans a universal necessity and a status in morality'.[94] This 'public doctrine' – 'the assumptions that constitute the framework within which teaching, writing and public action are conducted' – occupied the space vacated by the waning influence of Christianity as the focus of British public life.[95] In recent decades, he believed that a liberal 'clerisy' had seized control of 'public doctrine', instilling a disdainful attitude towards traditions and established values into public life.[96] Liberalism was thus fundamentally corrosive of the pre-existing modes of social cohesion. According to Kenneth Minogue, Cowling viewed his *raison d'être* as the re-establishment of a focus to national life, restoring a romantic reverence for British moral and political traditions.[97] Transformation of the 'tone' of the Conservative Party's expression would, in this regard, be the initial step in establishing a new 'public doctrine' to supplant the malignant hold of liberalism on the public mind.

Like Angus Maude, Cowling derived many of his arguments from a critique of the 'Lib-Lab positivism' of the social and political sciences.[98] He poured scorn on the work of David Butler and Robert McKenzie, accusing them of failing to understand the 'deviousness of all political activity'.[99] Their attempts at a scientific methodology resulted in 'still-life pictures', which described *what* happened, but not

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[94] Cowling, *The Nature and Limits of Political Science*, p.126.

[95] Maurice Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England: Volume I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.xi.

[96] Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, pp.ix-x. Cowling names prominent members of the 'clerisy' that were in the ascendancy in 1963 as 'The ghosts of Tawney, Beveridge and Keynes' along with 'Koestler, Snow, Ayer, Hampshire, Jenkins, Crosland, Shonfield, Kahn, Balogh, Kaldor, Joan Robinson, J. K. Galbraith and David Astor'. They were soon to be joined by new 'gurus' of the New Left like Raymond Williams, Eric Hobsbawm, Perry Anderson, Terry Eagleton and E. P. Thompson.

[97] Kenneth Minogue, 'Liberalism, Conservatism and Oakeshott in Cowling's Account of Public Doctrine', in Robert Crowcroft, S. J. D. Green and R. C. Whiting (eds), *The Philosophy, Politics and Religion of British Democracy: Maurice Cowling and Conservatism* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010), pp.27-41, at p.33.

[98] Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine: Vol. I*, p.xx.

[99] Cowling, *The Nature and Limits of Political Science*, p.21.

how it happened.[100] Moreover, such accounts, according to Cowling, tended to imply that no other course of events *could* have happened. Given the complicating influences of accident, intrigue and miscalculation in politics, intentions could not be automatically inferred from political consequences.[101] He sardonically pondered whether it would have been to the country's disadvantage had Butler devoted his attention to *Towards a text of Cicero: Ad Atticum*, rather than *The British General Election of 1959*.[102] In fact, he probably believed it would have been to the country's advantage had more scholars turned to historical studies or political philosophy, which would act as a 'liquidator of normative social and political science'.[103] By situating political institutions within their historical context, it would reveal the contingent and organic nature of political development. Political institutions were, from Cowling's perspective, not discrete entities designed *a priori* and subject to constant revision. On the contrary, they were 'complexes of arbitrary attitudes and opinions', which could not be understood in isolation from their historical context and relationship with other institutions.[104] In *Mill and Liberalism* he outlined his conviction that behind the façade of objectivity and rationality of John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism, lay an intolerant and aggressive attempt to impose a post-Christian outlook on public life, attacking the foundations of the social body. Although framed as a study of Mill's writings, Cowling later admitted, in the preface to the second edition, that it was primarily an attack on the political climate of the period with its 'rancid secular intelligentsias'.[105] Too often, in his mind, sociologists and political scientists sought to impose their own values behind the mask of a 'scientific method', which permitted them to establish what the content of 'rational policy or a

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[100] Ibid., p.153. Cowling used the examples of Macmillan's appointment as Prime Minister in 1957 and Nikita Khrushchev's attack on President Eisenhower at the Geneva Summit in 1960 to outline how 'still-life' studies of the formal workings of government and international relations failed to account for 'the way in which events occur'.

[101] Ibid., pp.20-1.

[102] Ibid., p.4.

[103] Ibid., p.11.

[104] Ibid., p.125.

[105] Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism,* 2nd edn, p.xiii.

rational ethic' was.[106] Thus, in implementing the policy recommendations of such 'experts', politicians like Heath were unwittingly engaged in the imposition of what Cowling deemed to be pernicious new moral norms.

The utilitarian ethic, which treated institutions as means to ends, was also the focus of John Casey's animus. While holding a position as a lecturer in the Cambridge English Faculty, Casey used his role as editor of the *Cambridge Review* (1975-79) to attack the Labour government's approach to educational reform. He presented the imposition of egalitarian reforms as a threat to the corporate autonomy of schools and universities, treating them as instrumental means to outside ends.[107] In doing so, he positioned himself firmly within the tradition of German idealism, envisaging institutions in Hegelian terms as embodiments of public values that transcended private interests. Therefore, like Cowling, he opposed liberal rationalism, perceiving its method of ahistorical scientific enquiry to be a threat to existing conventions and moral values. Rather than conceiving of agents as atomic individuals, he considered each human to be 'an historical, social and expressive being'.[108] While one might think this would put him at odds with the Conservative Party's individualist rhetoric under Thatcher's leadership, he made a distinction between individualism as a *policy* and individualist philosophy. In his contribution to *Conservative Essays*, Casey suggested that it was legitimate for Conservatives to make 'specious utilitarian arguments', provided they served to uphold existing institutions.[109] In this vein, what was presented as 'setting the people free' was in reality ensuring that their activities continued to be conducted within the framework of existing customs and modes of feeling, rather than being determined by the alternative morality latent in rationalist institutional frameworks. Human autonomy, in this sense, was the freedom to act within traditional moral and institutional frameworks. The idea of an 'unconditional freedom' was a chimera: 'freedom' made

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[106] Cowling, *The Nature and Limits of Political Science*, pp.153, 171.

[107] John Casey, 'The Tyranny of Fashion', *Cambridge Review* 100 (1977), pp.25-7.

[108] John Casey, 'Tradition and Authority', in Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays*, pp.82-100, at p.90.

[109] Ibid., p.85.

no sense without a social context.[110] By this sleight of hand, Casey was able to reconcile his Hegelian reverence for institutions with the anti-collectivism of the contemporary Conservative Party. His brand of idealist Toryism was not necessarily antipathetic towards 'rolling back the state'.

Indeed, the anti-deterministic philosophy and attentiveness to political language of the New Right ran parallel to the nominalist literary theory of Casey. Charles Covell has characterised Casey's thought as a marriage of German idealism and late-Wittgensteinian linguistic theory.[111] Wittgenstein came to repudiate the rationalistic philosophy of his first book, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), by dissolving the Cartesian dichotomy between mind and matter. Instead of conceiving of language as directly correspondent to an anterior reality, external to human cognition, he later came to view it as determined by human convention. Human agents could interpret 'reality' only according to the linguistic frameworks that they had inherited. As Covell argues, this possessed the conservative implication that shared understanding and social cohesion was dependent upon the relative stability of the forms of social life.[112] Indeed, Wittgenstein's linguistic theories complemented Hegel's understanding of self-consciousness, which can be described as a process of 'self-ascription'. 'Truth', in Hegelian terms, can only be expressed in the terms available to the person; it is thus historically contingent. Casey interpreted this as meaning that men (and presumably women) could not seek 'truth' solely in their own individuality, in an existentialist sense, but only in relation to the institutions, customs and 'modes of feeling' that they inherited.[113] Yet, as well as underlining the continuity inherent in the cognitive frameworks of communities, the theory of 'self-

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[110] Charles Covell, *The Redefinition of Conservatism: Politics and Doctrine* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), p.31.

[111] Ibid., p. 22.

[112] Ibid., p.4.

[113] Casey, 'Tradition and Authority', p.95. For a conservative critique of the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, see Roger Scruton, 'Jean-Paul Sartre', in idem., *Thinkers of the New Left* (Harlow: Longman, 1985), pp.176-192. Scruton describes Sartre as the 'arch-devil of the New Left' (p.176).

ascription' was also suggestive regarding the means by which the New Right might alter the political climate to one more favourable for their ends. It followed from the theory that if Conservatives desired to alter the public's understanding of political 'truth', they would have to refashion the terms of political debate, reworking inherited discourses, customs and values in their favour.

Casey's student and later fellow of Peterhouse, Roger Scruton, sought to interpret Hegel and Wittgenstein in a conservative light more explicitly. Like Casey, he believed that feelings and desires 'fit' themselves to the modes of expression available within a given culture, contrary to ahistorical structuralist theories.[114] Hence, the self does not exist prior to history and the customary morality (what Hegel termed the '*Sittlichkeit*') of its community. For Scruton, Hegel was 'the most substantive and authoritative of modern conservatives'.[115] In directing attention towards the 'thought processes' and 'life force' (*'Geist'*) of a society, which he understood as a living organism, Hegel provided an antidote to what Scruton described as the 'contractual' mode of thinking.[116] Again, John Stuart Mill served as the whipping boy. Scruton alleged that corporatism and collectivism were the by-products of the contractual mode of thinking intrinsic to utilitarianism. Politics, as a result of this outlook, was reduced to a question of coordination, attempting to prevent the satisfaction of one individual's desires impeding those of another. Instead of promoting individual liberty, this approach resulted in the precise opposite: the state's competencies proliferate, as it becomes a machine-like centre of distribution and planning. Indeed, the central problem with liberalism, in Scruton's mind, was that it possessed no concept of the 'superstructure of human values'.[117] In treating the law and institutions as instrumental means to ends, subject to perpetual reform, it

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[114] Roger Scruton, 'The Politics of Culture', in Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays*, pp. 101-16, at p. 108. For his critique of structuralism, see Roger Scruton, 'The Impossibility of Semiotics', *London Review of Books*, 7 February 1980, pp.31-43.

[115] Roger Scruton, 'G. W. F. Hegel', in idem., *Conservative Thinkers: Essays from the Salisbury Review* (London: Claridge Press, 1988), pp.135-53, at p.136.

[116] Ibid., pp.139, 147-8.

[117] Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p.82.

removed from them 'the image of a *particular* social arrangement', leaving a 'behaviouristic desertland'.[118]

Scruton was clear that politics should not be considered as a process of rational planning. Rather, he advised that Conservative government should proceed through the 'propagation of myths'.[119] Myths, he argued, 'constitute the great artifact whereby institutions enter the life of the state and absorb the life of the citizen', actively shaping individuals' identities and attitudes.[120] Class distinctions, for example, were not an automatic reflection of the relationship to the means of production, but arose in the realm of myth, emerging and persisting independently from the transfer of wealth.[121] Given that 'the surface of things' possessed a formative role in politics, rather than merely being an epiphenomenon of the underlying economic and social structure, Scruton emphasised the importance of 'style' in political leadership.[122] Not only would this divert from the contractual understanding of politics, it could also renew the sense of shared identity between the nation and its rulers. The task of the new Conservative leadership was thus to reconnect their political 'style' to the loyalties, values and aspirations of the nation.

The American-born political theorist at the London School of Economics (LSE), Shirley Robin Letwin, in her contribution to *Conservative Essays*, described this approach as the 'Pied Piper method' of political leadership.[123] Her advocacy of this course might be considered surprising given that she belonged to the liberal

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[118] Ibid., pp.81-2.

[119] Ibid., p.29.

[120] Ibid., p.169.

[121] Ibid., pp.180-81. Scruton went on to note his agreement with E. P. Thompson's dictum that 'class is defined by men as they live their own history'.

[122] Ibid., pp.39, 44-5.

[123] Shirley Robin Letwin, 'On Conservative Individualism', in Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays*, pp.52-68, at p.62. Letwin spent most of her academic career at the London School of Economics. She also taught at Peterhouse. As well as being a founding member of the Conservative Philosophy Group, she was also heavily involved with the work of the CPS, later becoming a director. Her husband, the economist William Letwin, was also an important figure in the New Right. See Roger Middleton, 'Letwin, William Louis (1922–2013)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Jan 2017, [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/106279, accessed 15 May 2017].

tradition of empiricism, drawing upon Hobbes and Hume, rather than Hegel and Wittgenstein. Indeed, she possessed none of Casey and Scruton's romantic attachment to the state as the embodiment of the values of the nation, denouncing Edmund Burke for making the government 'responsible for the highest morality'.[124] Nevertheless, her hostility to Benthamite utilitarianism and the positivistic approach to politics of Sidney and Beatrice Webb meant that she did possess common ground with Tory organicists. She attempted to differentiate between the liberal tradition, which sought to preserve individual liberty and the neutrality of the law, from liberal utilitarianism, in which a technocratic elite imposed policy prescriptions without bothering to secure democratic consent.[125] She contended that the latter, which equated reason with the universally valid, resulted in individuality being deemed as inherently irrational and disorderly.[126] In order to overcome the apparent disorder of individualism, adherents to this worldview had sought to organise the disorderly struggle between atomized individuals into a mechanical bargaining process between 'interest groups'. Thus, collectivization and corporatism were, in Letwin's mind, bedfellows of the utilitarians' conception of the individual. Yet, if one adopts what Letwin terms a 'Conservative individualism', one can overcome this purported rationalist dichotomy between unity and disorder.[127] By defining reason not as access to a universal truth, but rather as the 'creative capacity to transform experiences into a variety of responses, interpretations, and reflections', social stability can be considered as consonant with the freedom of individuals to manage their own lives.[128] Given that individuals can, according to this schema, entirely rationally give different meanings to events, personal choice need not be considered irrational. Such reasoning, Letwin believed, reconciled the liberal emphasis on individual choice with

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[124] Shirley Robin Letwin, *The Pursuit of Certainty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p.121.
[125] Covell, *The Redefinition of Conservatism*, p.183.
[126] Letwin, 'On Conservative Individualism', pp.52-4.
[127] Ibid., p.56.
[128] Ibid., p.56.

the conservative attachment to the traditions and institutions that provided the framework within which rational choice was exercised.

In many ways Letwin's thought, like that of Cowling, Casey and Scruton, represented a middle way between empiricism and idealism. Human beings were deemed to inherit mental constructions that had been acquired empirically over previous generations and transmitted through the familial structure. This emphasis on intellectual inheritance encouraged Conservative thinkers to move towards an understanding of human thought as possessing a greater degree of autonomy from immediate material concerns. Letwin, for instance, argued that men's interests were not simply dependent upon their circumstances, but rather on what they had learned to think their interests were.[129] Whether a worker thought of himself as a skilled artisan or as a member of the oppressed proletariat was contingent upon the prevailing language and political culture of his contemporaries. It thus followed that the best way to win the allegiance of voters was not simply to ensure their material interests were satiated by, for example, maintaining a high growth rate, but rather by altering their understanding of their own interests. Just like Scruton, Letwin recognized the centrality of mythology to political leadership, in which politicians' sought to 'mesmerise' the community into accepting their construction of reality.[130] Following a period of inarticulate leadership under Heath, who seemed to consider voters' interests as being objectively determined by their material well being, they felt that the new Conservative leadership would have to re-establish a genuine, almost metaphysical, connection with the electorate. Consequently, this group of Conservative thinkers dedicated themselves to assisting the Conservative Party in formulating a new political rhetoric to regain the ascendancy in British politics.

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[129] Ibid., p.58.
[130] Ibid., p.62.

2.5 Rolling Back the State

As we have seen, Casey and Letwin had to undertake some intellectual gyrations in order to harmonize their traditionalist conservatism with the libertarian implications of the Conservative Party's contemporary commitment to 'roll back the frontiers of the state'. In fact, a series of historians and commentators have cast doubt upon whether the neo-liberal economic philosophy, supposedly embraced by Thatcher, was compatible with the Conservative philosophical tradition.[131] While some traditionalist Tories, such as Peregrine Worsthorne,[132] were undoubtedly uneasy with the libertarian tendencies and 'freedom' rhetoric of the Conservatives under Thatcher's leadership, a case could be made that the New Right represented an assimilation of neo-liberal policy into the Conservative tradition, rather than constituting an abrupt ideological caesura.

Philip Mirowski has argued that, in focusing excessively on Milton Friedman and the Chicago School, which were not necessarily representative of the bulk of neo-liberal thought, academics have exaggerated the individualism and libertarianism of neo-liberalism.[133] Unlike Friedman, a 'master simplifier', who sought to reconcile neo-liberalism with classical liberal economics, most neo-liberals connected to the Mont Pelerin Society were sceptical of such 'scientism'.[134] Writing in the *Salisbury Review,* John Gray highlighted the extent to which Friedrich von Hayek departed from the rationalism of classical liberalism. According to Gray, Hayek drew inspiration during his Viennese upbringing from the epistemology of

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[131] Most prominently Ian Gilmour, *Dancing with Dogma: Britain under Thatcherism* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1992). See also Ian Gilmour and Mark Garnett, *Whatever Happened to the Tories: The Conservative Party since 1945* (London: Fourth Estate, 1997). Ewen Green in *Thatcher* also advanced this interpretation, declaring that 'Thatcher embraced a libertarian philosophy that was not part of, and could not be reconciled with, the Conservative tradition' (p.51).

[132] See Peregrine Worsthorne, 'Too Much Freedom', in Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays*, pp.141-54. Worsthorne likened Thatcher's approach to 'trying to smooth raging waters with a stick of dynamite or to quieten hubbub with a brass band' (p.149).

[133] Philip Mirowski, 'The Political Movement that Dared not Speak its Own Name: The Neoliberal Thought Collective Under Erasure', *Institute for New Economic Thinking*, Working Paper No. 23 (2014).

[134] Ibid., pp.8-9.

Immanuel Kant, Karl Kraus, Fritz Mauthner and Ludwig Wittgenstein.[135] For Hayek, the human mind was not a *tabula rasa*, but a mirror imposing order onto the turmoil of existence according to inherited mental categories. Such a concern with human cognition meant that Hayek shared with the intellectuals of the Peterhouse School a concern with the perversion of language as a means of corrupting political culture. From this nominalist standpoint, Hayek critiqued the contemporary usage of the term 'social justice', just as Powell and Joseph did in later years. Hayek's opposition to economic planning lay in that it was an *epistemological* impossibility. Given that much of human knowledge is 'meta-conscious', embodied in habits and dispositions, Hayek argued that the claim of socialism to be able to rationally allocate resources was delusional.[136] Thus, in spite of his repudiation of the Conservative label, Hayek's thought did have aspects in common with that of organicist Tory intellectuals, preferring the organic resource allocation of the free market to the recourse to legislation.

Members of the Salisbury Group were, however, uneasily aware of the danger that opposition to socialist collectivism could easily lapse into a permissive liberalism, which could dissolve the bonds of social cohesion. Cowling feared that the Conservatives could, 'if they talk about freedom long enough, begin to think that it is what they want'.[137] While rhetoric of 'freedom' may prove useful as an instrumental abstraction, calculated to generate support for the preservation of existing inequalities, Cowling feared that works like Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) were 'designed to achieve Socialism's ethical objectives without resorting to Socialist methods'.[138] He was nonetheless confident that the Conservatives were moving in the right direction under Thatcher's leadership. In 1978 he praised Thatcher's 'remarkable achievement' of having 'imposed the necessary truths upon

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[135] John Gray, 'F. A. von Hayek', in Scruton (ed.), *Conservative Thinkers*, pp.249-259, at pp. 249-250.

[136] Ibid., pp.251, 253.

[137] Cowling, 'The Present Position', p.9.

[138] Maurice Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England, Vol. III: Accommodations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.496.

the Conservative Party'.[139] By 1989, Cowling reflected that some of the criticisms of the New Right's economic liberalism in *Conservative Essays* were 'ill-sighted'.[140] Looking back on Thatcher's period as Conservative leader from the vantage point of 1997, Cowling wrote in *Politeia* magazine that she possessed an instinctual connection with the moral values and social respectability of suburban conservatism. He argued that, unlike some of her supporters, Thatcher was never a doctrinaire politician.[141]

From the Salisbury Group's perspective, it was critical that this distinction - between liberal policies and liberal doctrine - was upheld. Liberal rhetoric and policies were acceptable, David J. Levy[142] wrote in the *Salisbury Review*, so long as the liberal conception of the individual was regarded as a 'moral fiction', rather than as a political theory.[143] Given that the individual is embedded within a web of social relationships, total autonomy was ultimately illusory. Yet, the encouragement of personal responsibility implicit in the belief in the autonomous self was, according to Levy, something to be cherished. Though, he warned, the danger remained that a genuine belief in the liberal fiction would result in 'irreverence towards the very conditions which make some simulacrum of apolitical selfhood possible'.[144] It seems that, for some Conservative thinkers, economic liberalism was to be employed as a purely *instrumental* policy, designed to legitimize the diminution of illegitimate state power, rather than as a doctrine understood to furnish an accurate representation of human nature. This was a very fine line to tread.

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[139] Cowling, 'The Present Position', pp.6-7. In a typically enigmatic manner, he failed to specify precisely what these 'truths' were.

[140] Maurice Cowling, 'The Sources of the New Right: Irony, Geniality & Malice', *Encounter* (1989), pp.3-13, at p.5

[141] Maurice Cowling, *A Conservative Future* (London: Politeia 1997).

[142] David Levy (1947-2003), a sociologist at Middlesex Polytechnic, was a close friend of Roger Scruton. His academic work contested quantitative approaches to sociology and affirmed the pre-eminence of national cultures and patriotism over class divisions. During the 1980s he was highly involved in Eastern European dissident networks. See 'David Levy', *The Times*, 26 January 2004, p.25.

[143] David J. Levy, 'The Politics of the Self', *Salisbury Review* 6 (1984), pp.8-10.

[144] Ibid, p.9.

2.6 A Tory Marxism

A preoccupation with the influence of neo-liberal thinkers, like Hayek and Friedman, on the New Right has given the false impression that their thought was, in the words of Daniel T. Rodgers, 'straightforward and economistic', adopting a 'rational actor' perspective towards political and consumer behaviour.[145] The New Right is thus often presented as the antithesis of the culturalist and anti-materialist politics of the New Left. Madeleine Davis and Lawrence Black have outlined how the New Left challenged the materialistic and deterministic assumptions of both Labour traditionalists and Croslandite revisionists, instead emphasizing human agency in the evolution of a socialist, communitarian culture.[146] Yet, the extent to which Conservative discontents arose from a similar anti-materialistic perspective has been underplayed. Like the New Left, they were preoccupied with the moral and cultural sphere, which they regarded as relatively autonomous from the material base of society. In fact, one might go as far as to suggest that the New Right's efforts to reshape British culture, cleansing it of the malign values and culture of the 1960s and 1970s, constituted a conservative simulacrum of the New Left project, at once emulating and counteracting it.

Indeed, many of the aforementioned Tory thinkers drew explicitly upon Marxist and neo-Marxist ideas, appropriating them for Conservative ends. John Casey wrote that, like Marxists, Conservatives view human nature not as timeless, but as defined by human activity in the world.[147] Yet, whilst in Marx's work tradition 'weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living', for Casey it was a benevolent force, providing meaning and a sense of belonging to the otherwise arbitrary confusion of life.[148] Likewise, Maurice Cowling felt a sense of affinity with

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[145] Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), p.98.
[146] Madeleine Davis, 'Arguing Affluence: New Left Contributions to the Socialist Debate 1957–63', *Twentieth Century British History* 23 (2012), pp.496-528; Lawrence Black*, The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951–64: Old Labour, New Britain?* (Basingstoke, 2003), chapter 10.
[147] Casey, 'Tradition and Authority', p.96.
[148] Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (London: Allen and Unwin, 1926), p.10.

Marxism, deploying a similar emphasis on ideology and historical relativism against the universalistic assumptions of liberalism. He even accepted that there was a 'class war'; however, he insisted that, if 'handled with subtlety and skill', Conservatives could neutralize its implications.[149] Politicians' rhetorical manipulation possessed the power to alter groups' conceptions of their interests. In this sense, Cowling's thought was more akin to that of the New Left, in its rejection of the theory that class interest was objectively determined. Writing in 1990, he looked back on the transformation of the intellectual Left, as the 'scientific' and economistic socialism of the Webbs and Tony Crosland was displaced by the ideas of new sages like Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson.[150] Although he derided Raymond Williams for his sanctimony and continual repetition of the obvious, Cowling wrote positively of his rejection of the base/superstructure model of culture in favour of a belief in 'creation and self-creation'.[151] He even suggested that 'In this context, there is no need for conservative thought to be afraid of Marxism or to fail to turn its insights to advantage'.[152] Cultural 'hegemony', in Cowling's mind, was a necessary and positive force for social stability in a society.

Roger Scruton wrote a series of essays for the *Salisbury Review*, in which he critically engaged with the thought of some of the thinkers of the New Left. Although he was deeply disparaging towards their utopianism and their hostility to established institutions, he did recognize the pertinence of some of their ideas *vis-à-vis* ideology and the intellectual climate. He wrote that 'most that is interesting and true in such writers is detachable from the ideology that has provided its fashionable appeal'.[153] In other words, theories of the New Left could serve Conservative ends, countering the deleterious influence of left-wing ideas on the public mind. Antonio Gramsci's theory of 'hegemony', for example, was taken to demonstrate the role of

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[149] Cowling, 'The Present Position', p.1.
[150] Maurice Cowling, 'Raymond Williams in retrospect', *The New Criterion* 8 (1990).
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Roger Scruton, 'What is Left?', in idem., *Thinkers of the New Left*, pp.1-9, at p.1.

religion, education and mass communications in shaping the national consciousness.[154] However, in Scruton's mind, Gramsci was unable to accept the implications of his own theories. Recognizing the agency of the political sphere put paid to any notion that the ideological superstructure was but an epiphenomenon of deeper forces in the economic base. Gramsci's deployment of Marxian jargon in his discussion of the 'dialectical' relationship between the base and the superstructure was hence nothing but a form of casuistry intended to mask the fundamental incompatibility of his argument with Marxist historical materialism.

Scruton advanced a similar reading of E. P. Thompson, enthusiastically endorsing his challenge to the orthodox Marxist theory of class formation, but questioning why he did not follow through on its implications. Thompson was, according to Scruton, guilty of an 'uncritical attitude to his own sermonising'; his continued loyalty to Marxism signified that 'having revealed a meaning in history, he force[d] himself not to perceive it.'[155] The most influential forces in the 'making' of the English working class, in Thompson's account – political association, non-conformist religion, local customs and language – were all non-material. Indeed, Scruton claimed that Thompson sketched a 'picture of the working class that no conservative need dissent from', given that they were wedded to custom, religion and traditional moral values.[156] Yet, he contended that Thompson's 'gross sentimentalization' of the working class resulted in him privileging class identity as the exclusive agent of history, without recognizing the comparable, if not more significant, influence of national consciousness.[157] Clearly, Scruton's ideas accorded with much of the New Left's analysis of the workings of power, concurring that

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[154] Roger Scruton, 'Antonio Gramsci', in idem., *Thinkers of the New Left*, pp.76-86, at p.80.

[155] Roger Scruton, 'E. P. Thompson', in idem., *Thinkers of the New Left*, pp. 10-19, at p.18.

[156] Ibid., p.12.

[157] Ibid., p.14.

traditions and established power relations were upheld by hegemonic ideologies. He just didn't think that this was such a bad thing.[158]

It was a common theme that thinkers of the New Right accepted elements of left-wing analysis whilst directing it to the end of conserving the status quo, rather than subverting it. As we have seen, Angus Maude, in *The Common Problem*, framed much of his analysis around the ideas in J. K. Galbraith's 'penetrating' study, *The New Industrial State* (1967).[159] The growth of large corporations had, according to this analysis, resulted in the obsolescence of competitive market forces as the determinant of prices and production. Instead, a 'technostructure' of elite technicians within these corporations was able to fabricate demand, the consumer becoming an object, as opposed to a subject, of the economic system. However, whilst Galbraith accepted these developments as the inevitable ramifications of capitalist development, Maude sought a means of reversing them, encouraging resistance to the politics of 'technique' and the break-up of large-scale monopolistic enterprises.[160] Roger Scruton, when turning his attention to Galbraith, lambasted his adherence to the 'central, crippling myth of Marxism', namely economic determinism.[161] Like Thompson and Gramsci, Galbraith was accused of being blind to the implications of his own theories. If ownership and control of industry had become separated, the basic premises of Marx's theories of capitalist exploitation and class conflict were, according to Scruton, undermined.[162] Yet, instead of stressing this part of his theories, Galbraith dedicated much his public message to advocating just the sort of interventionist policies that nurtured the 'technostructure' he described. Scruton was therefore unable to mask his contempt for this 'irritating

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[158] See Roger Scruton, 'Michel Foucault', in idem., *Thinkers of the New Left*, pp. 31-44. Scruton recommends that we 'separate Foucault's analysis of the workings of power from the facile idealism' which recommended its abolition (p. 41).
[159] Maude, *The Common Problem*, p.215.
[160] Ibid., pp.221, 227-28.
[161] Roger Scruton, 'J. K. Galbraith', in idem., *Thinkers of the New Left*, pp.162-75, at p.170.
[162] Ibid., p.165.

parasite'.[163] Thus, whilst Conservatives shared Galbraith's recognition of the growing pervasiveness of technocracy, they, unlike him, were committed to reversing it.

One might go further and say that the New Right viewed themselves as being embroiled in an almighty ideological struggle to counteract the New Left's attempts to subvert established values and institutions and to install their counter culture in Britain. A key battleground in this contest was for control over political discourse. In what Scruton termed one of his 'lapses into bourgeois truthfulness', Perry Anderson recognized that 'language, far from always following material changes, may sometimes anticipate them'.[164] Words were not neutral signifiers of an external reality, but ideologically loaded mental constructions, possessing the power to transform shared understandings of the world. In accepting that language was malleable, thinkers of the New Right became paranoid about insidious left-wing strategies of linguistic subversion. Sally Shreir outlined these fears in an essay on 'The Politics of Language' in the *Salisbury Review*. She outlined two linguistic strategies employed by Marxists and neo-Marxists to transform public attitudes. Firstly, certain concepts were abrogated from the language by censure or replacement by circumlocutory jargon. Secondly, and more insidiously, the meaning of certain words was gradually subverted. 'Peace', for example, was, according to Shreir, in the process of being transformed from meaning 'absence of hostilities', to meaning 'absence of effective weapons'.[165] If Conservatives were to retain the loyalty of the public, they would thus have to fight the Left at its own game. Shreir noted the central role language had played in the establishment of national identities, using the example of Atatürk's adoption of the Latin alphabet and purge of Persian and Arabic elements from the Turkish language in order to mould the identities of

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[163] Ibid., p.174.

[164] Roger Scruton, 'Perry Anderson', in idem., *Thinkers of the New Left*, pp.129-43, at pp.139-40. Scruton considered Anderson, as the editor of the *New Left Review*, to be a major force in the New Left's attempt to establish a 'counter culture' in Britain, introducing an 'alternative syllabus' of theorists like Althusser, Adorno, Debray and Lacan (p.131).

[165] Sally Shreir, 'The Politics of Language', *Salisbury Review* 1 (1983).

citizens of the new republic.[166] A similar reconstruction of British political discourse was felt to be necessary to overcome a purported left-wing bias. This was a task that figures like Alfred Sherman and Keith Joseph would embark upon with vigour, founding the Centre for Policy Studies as an institution dedicated to the transformation of the climate of public opinion, reversing what Joseph termed 'the debasement of the political vocabulary'.[167]

2.7 Enoch Powell

One politician whose shadow loomed over this period of British political history is Enoch Powell. His infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech to a CPC meeting in Birmingham on 20 April 1968 did indeed provoke a 'chorus of execration' and much academic ink continues to be spilt on it today.[168] Nevertheless, as Richard Vinen has noted, in spite of his public profile, historians have struggled to fit Powell into their narratives of political and ideological movements.[169] His solitary, unworldly nature and propensity to resign (or be dismissed) from the Conservative frontbench have led historians to consider him as more of an ideologist or philosopher than a politician.[170] During his early career, the term 'Powellism' was often employed to denote a system of *laissez-faire* economics; but since 1968, it has been widely employed as a

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[166] Ibid.

[167] Joseph and Sumption, *Equality*, p.28.

[168] See for example, Peter Brooke, 'India, Post-Imperialism and the Origins of Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" Speech', *Historical Journal* 50 (2007), pp.669-87; Nicholas Hillman, 'A "Chorus of Execration"? Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" Forty Years On', *Patterns of Prejudice* 42 (2008), pp.83-104; Amy Whipple, 'Revisiting the "Rivers of Blood" Controversy: Letters to Enoch Powell', *Journal of British Studies* 48 (2009), pp.717-35; Kevin Hickson, 'Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood Speech": Fifty Years On', *The Political Quarterly* 89 (2018), pp.352-7; Judi Atkins, '"Strangers in their own Country": Epideictic Rhetoric and Communal Definition in Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" Speech', *The Political Quarterly* 89 (2018), pp.362-9.

[169] Richard Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London, Simon & Schuster, 2009), p.44.

[170] As a result, Powell has been perhaps better suited to biographical treatment. Examples include: T. E. Utley, *Enoch Powell: The Man and his Thinking* (London: Kimber, 1968); Paul Foot, *The Rise of Enoch Powell* (London: Cornmarket Press, 1969); Andrew Roth, *Enoch Powell: Tory Tribune* (London: Macdonald &Co., 1970); Simon Heffer, *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1998).

synonym for British racism and white supremacism. The preoccupation of historians
and social scientists with the search for a logical basis for Powell's ideas on
economic policy and race has tended, however, to obscure the more fundamental
purpose of his activities. Powell was not primarily an academic philosopher, an
economist, or a racial theorist; he was a politician, making calculated interventions in
specific circumstances. The radical difference of his political approach from that of
the Conservative and Labour Party leaderships is worthy of further analysis.

Powell should be considered, along with the other figures discussed in this
chapter, to have been engaged in an attempt to establish a new basis for the
Conservative Party's 'politics of support'.[171] In this vein, his 1968 speech was as an
attempt to establish 'resonances' with the public, deferring to their prejudices in
order to generate reciprocal sympathy.[172] He considered himself to be representing
the public 'not in the electoral or psephological sense but in the symbolical sense'.[173]
Powell addressed, and in so doing sought to create, a unitary national mind, absent as
far as possible of minority outlooks and communities. His outlook was, of course,
inherently exclusionary, denying the possibility of assimilation of non-white
immigrants; but it also had the effect of transcending other established political
divisions. The supportive marches by dockers and meat porters indicated to
Conservatives sympathetic to Powell that electoral segmentation of the public
according to social class and occupation was not inevitable and that it was possible
for the party to generate a cross-sectional appeal. The Peterhouse historian John
Vincent, for example, was enthused by Powell's populism as, from his perspective, it
offered 'a model of a possible alternative to managerial government', which could
permit the Conservative Party to abandon the defensive electoral perspective of the

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[171] Gamble, *Conservative Nation*, pp.121-2.

[172] Cowling, 'The Present Position', p.19.

[173] Enoch Powell speech to the Southchurch dinner of the Southend East Conservative Association,
Chalkwell Park Suite, Southend, 24 April 1981, The Papers of John Enoch Powell, Churchill Archives
Centre, Cambridge [hereafter PP], POLL 4/1/15.

previous decade.[174] Powell deliberately incited an emotive issue precisely because it was emotive. In other words, he sought to shift the terrain of British political debate away from considerations of technocratic competence to more irrational, but profoundly more impassioned, questions of group loyalties and belonging. Indeed, in articulating what he described as 'the wishes and aspirations, the fears and the repugnances of the majority of that mass of ordinary people', Powell believed he had dramatically exposed the extent to which the 'politico-cultural elite' misunderstood, or were indifferent to, how the public actually thought about politics.[175]

Having said that, Powell did not consider himself to be simply a tribune of the 'ordinary people'. He remained attached to a romantic vision of a hierarchical status order in which political leaders held a didactic responsibility. In fact, he expounded this outlook explicitly in an address the Ballymena Youth Chamber in 1982. The political leader must, Powell reasoned, reconcile two potentially contradictory roles: to 'represent his people, speak for them, express what they think, what they want and what they feel', but also to 'teach his people, opening their eyes to possibilities and impossibilities'.[176] In some respects this amounted to a role as 'the nation's psychiatrist', who merely dramatized the 'inevitabilities' of political change in order to maintain the stability of the collective consciousness.[177] Camilla Schofield has suggested that this implied an aversion to the 'transformism' embraced by the Thatcher governments.[178] Certainly, Powell treated the existence of popular prejudices as an inevitability, which politicians would have to accommodate. Nevertheless, political leaders did, in Powell's mind, possess some form of creative

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[174] Cited in Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.221. See also, George Gale, 'The Popular Communication of a Conservative Message', in Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays*, p.183.

[175] Enoch Powell speech to Rugby Conservative Fair, 27 November 1971, PP, POLL 4/1/7.

[176] Enoch Powell address to the Ballymena Youth Chamber on 'The Role of Leadership in Society Today', 20 September 1982, PP, POLL 4/1/15.

[177] Enoch Power, 'Power and Glory: The Nation in the Mirror', Address to the Manchester Conservatives Dinner, 6 November 1965, PP, POLL 4/1/2.

[178] Camilla Schofield, 'Enoch Powell and Thatcherism', in Jackson and Saunders (eds), *Making Thatcher's Britain,* pp.95-110, at pp.102-3.

potential to alter popular perspectives. He insisted that 'creative words', in establishing a narrative or mythology in the popular mind, could 'extend the limits of future vision and action, not only for Conservative government but for the nation'.[179] Powell, like the 'Peterhouse School' and the participants at the Swinton College symposium, sought a means to escape the constraints on the Conservative Party's actions, which appeared to have been imposed by the electoral perspective that prevailed under Heath's leadership. As he told the City of London Young Conservatives in April 1966, a week after the party's general election defeat, politics was about 'Words not Action'.[180] Powell's inversion of the title of the party manifesto could not have made his polemical intention clearer.

Rather than opposing 'transformism' *per se*, Powell critiqued rationalistic conceptions of public behaviour whereby individuals could be expected to respond predictably to state interventions or economic incentives. From his perspective, the public needed to be inspired, not managed or incentivized. Powell's deification of the free market and involvement with the IEA has given the misleading impression that he was a neo-liberal ideologue. While he enthusiastically endorsed control of the money supply and denationalization, he did not subscribe to economic models that assumed that individuals were rational actors. In fact, he sought to correct some of the liberal enthusiasms of the Selsdon Group of Conservative MPs in a speech to their *Wealth of Nations* Anniversary Dinner in June 1976. Adam Smith's *magnum opus* should not, he warned, be treated as a 'tract for the times'. A product of the innocent 'rationalistic, deistic world of the eighteenth century', Smith's work was blind to what Powell described as 'the instinctual element in society and the demonic element of man'. Human motivation could not, he argued, be captured by the 'translucent mathematical mechanism' of rational self-interest.[181] Thus, although Powell insisted that economically liberal policies were desirable in permitting the

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[179] Enoch Powell speech to the City of London Young Conservatives, 6 April 1966, PP, POLL 4/1/2.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Enoch Powell, Speech to the Selsdon Group's 'Wealth of Nations' Anniversary Dinner, 5 June 1976, PP, POLL 4/1/11.

free, organic development of trade and civil society, he argued that governance also required an appreciation of more irrational human motivations and the will to power.

In this sense, Powell's political philosophy was very similar to those of his academic peers in the CPG. As we have seen, Powell was a frequent dinner guest of Maurice Cowling at Peterhouse in the late 1960s and at one stage Cowling held great hopes that Powell could 'manufactur[e] a spiritual glue that would bind down the élite and force it to use a language that would bind it to everyone else'.[182] Although Powell left the Conservative Party, endorsing the Labour Party in the February 1974 general election, Cowling retained hope that he could contribute more effectively to altering the 'tone' of British politics from outside party strictures.[183] In retrospect, Cowling reflected that although Powell appeared to have been a lone wolf in British politics, he had nonetheless generated a catalytic effect within the New Right. For those admirers of Butterfield and Oakeshott at Peterhouse and the *Daily Telegraph*, Powell's prominence convinced them of what they had 'only half-believed', namely that 'the conclusions of a pessimistic sub-section of the intelligentsia were in many ways the opinions of the people'.[184] Powell indicated the potential for intellectual cynicism to be translated into a practical political agenda, holding out the possibility that the intellectual orthodoxies of the prevailing political consensus could be overturned.

Powell was, therefore, a significant figure in the emergence of the New Right; however, one should be careful as to how one defines his influence. It is misleading to describe 'Powellism', if one can speak of such a thing, as a 'proto-Thatcherite' doctrine. He became, in fact, a frequent critic of the Thatcher governments' policies. For example, in 1987 he described the establishment of a National Curriculum as 'the kind of thing which one could imagine happening in a

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[182] Cowling, 'The Present Position', p.19.

[183] Ibid., p.19. Cowling even speculated that Powell might join the Labour Party, 'blunting its virtue' by diverting the party's interest towards subjects like Europe, Ireland, and immigration. This, he argued, would be similar to the effect another 'unmuzzled Tory', William Ewart Gladstone, had once had on the Liberal Party.

[184] Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine: Vol. I*, p.432.

nightmare' and 'an affront amounting to a blasphemy'.[185] In its efforts to improve the employability and 'competitiveness' of school leavers, the Thatcher government had, in Powell's mind, relapsed into the same fallacy as the Heath government, assuming that national performance and well-being could be measured according to a material calculus.

Nevertheless, the fact that the Thatcher governments' politics moved in a direction to which Powell was less than entirely amenable should not necessarily be taken to denote that 'Powellism' and 'Thatcherism' were two entirely discrete entities. Rather than reifying their political thought into two static credos, we should recognize that they were both engaged in an effort to rewrite the rules of British politics. Tom Nairn, writing in the *New Left Review* in 1970, was correct to argue that Powell's importance was not 'intrinsic', in that he was unlikely to personally establish a political movement.[186] His departure from the Conservative Party in February 1974 and return to Westminster, eight months later, as an Ulster Unionist MP, made his influence akin to that of a prince across the water at most. In retrospect, Powell should be considered as just one among many New Right actors who were engaged in a political effort to re-establish an effective mode of Conservative leadership. He was not unique in this sense. Nairn put this in Gramscian terms, arguing that the New Right, of which Powell was part, sought to overcome a 'fissure in the traditional mode of hegemony'.[187] In other words, the political actors of the New Right attempted to regain their control, or command, over public opinion, which had apparently been lost in the 1960s and 1970s.

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[185] Enoch Powell address to the Philosophical Society of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 18 December 1987, PP, POLL 4/1/19.
[186] Tom Nairn, 'Enoch Powell: The New Right', *New Left Review* 61 (1970), pp.3-27, at p.25.
[187] Ibid., p.24.

2.8 Conclusion

One might consider tracing the thought and political activities of the characters discussed in this chapter to be something of a false trail. As we have seen, the fellows of the 'Peterhouse School' disdained any notion of political 'relevance' and politicians like Angus Maude and Enoch Powell could be regarded as washed-up malcontents launching haphazard invective towards a vaguely defined 'politico-cultural elite'. Given that their ideas do not fit easily into a narrative of neo-liberal 'Thatcherite' counter-revolution, historians have tended to sideline them. Richard Cockett briefly discussed the CPG and Salisbury Group, portraying them as obscure discussion groups preoccupied with the assimilation of economic liberalism into 'Conservative Philosophy'.[188] Similarly, Brian Harrison considered their 'somewhat rarefied concerns' to be relatively inconsequential when compared to 'the economic concerns (Liberal in pedigree) that lay at the heart of Thatcherism'.[189] However, if one abandons any assumption that matters of political economy were the sole preoccupation of the early New Right, one can discern in these discussions the intellectual roots of a broader effort to reformulate Conservative politics. Notwithstanding their 'disavowals', it is hard to deny that the interlocutors in these arcane discussions of Hegel and Wittgenstein did, if only at the back of their minds, perceive a practical function for their ideas. While the initial outbursts of Maude, Powell and Szamuely in the late 1960s might have seemed like isolated incidents, there then followed a decade of ever-closer association among Conservative dissenters. The 1968 Swinton College symposium, the foundation of the CPG and the publication of *Conservative Essays* were all efforts to formulate an alternative basis for the Conservative Party's 'politics of support' to supersede Heath's 'politics of technique'.

In the next chapter, we shall see that many of the thinkers discussed in this chapter became part of Margaret Thatcher's entourage during her period as Leader of

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[188] Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, pp.219-20.
[189] Harrison, 'Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals', p.210.

the Opposition. In fact, Angus Maude played a central role in positioning Thatcher as an alternative to Heath, writing her famous *Daily Telegraph* article, 'My Kind of Tory'.[190] As a result, Thatcher presented herself as running on a platform very similar to that outlined in Maude's *The Common Problem*. The article reiterated Maude's aversion to technocracy, pronouncing that politicians should not be 'professional efficiency experts or amateur industrial consultants'.[191] What is more, Thatcher conveyed Maude's distaste for the prevailing preoccupation with economic growth and economies of scale, declaring that 'Size is not all, any more than economic growth is'.[192] In the campaign, Thatcher was effectively running as the representative of those Conservatives who had dissented from Heath's approach, of whom Maude was a leading figure. It is therefore unsurprising that he was appointed to replace Ian Gilmour as Chairman of the CRD in 1975, overseeing a body that had played a central role in the party's adoption of a rationalist, technocratic approach to politics.[193]

Figures discussed in this chapter, who had been isolated and dispersed on the fringes of Conservative politics, now had a route into the party mainstream. T. E. Utley, for example, frequently contributed passages to Thatcher's speech writing process and remained close to her until his death in 1988.[194] Likewise, Patrick Cosgrave and Shirley Letwin worked closely with Thatcher, especially in the field of speech writing. Yet, while personal relationships and 'networking' did achieve some level of influence, it would take another level of organization and co-ordination to comprehensively alter the Conservative Party's political approach. Alfred Sherman and his Centre for Policy Studies provided this foothold, serving as a 'clearing-house

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[190] Margaret Thatcher, 'My Kind of Tory Party', *Daily Telegraph*, 30 January 1975, p.16; Garnett and Hickson, *Conservative Thinkers,* p.85.

[191] Thatcher, 'My Kind of Tory Party'.

[192] Ibid.

[193] See Ramsden, *Making of Conservative Party Policy*; Norton, 'The Role of the Conservative Political Centre, 1945-98'.

[194] Stapleton, 'T. E. Utley and Renewal of Conservatism in Post-War Britain', p.221.

for the deposits and borrowings of ideas'.[195] In many respects, Sherman's success in achieving practical influence stemmed from being, unlike Maude in 1966, in the right place at the right time, preaching to a receptive audience following the ignominious collapse of the Heath government. However, as we shall see, unlike the languid denizens of senior common rooms, Sherman possessed the requisite zeal to push his ideas in the highest political circles.

Although further removed from the centres of power, Tory philosophers like Casey, Cowling and Scruton were indirectly connected to the Conservative leadership, mixing in the same circles. Their distinctive influence might be discerned in the novel emphasis Thatcher's advisers and colleagues placed on transforming public discourse and collective consciousness. Alfred Sherman shared this intellectual perspective and was eager to accumulate ideas from an eclectic range of academics. Indeed, the CPS's attempt to purge socialism from political life encompassed a much broader range of concerns than simply those regarding the economic sphere. Its explicit *raison d'être* was to transform the climate of public opinion. In the process, the Centre drew upon the critiques of materialist politics advanced by the traditionalist Tory intellectuals of the Peterhouse School and their journalistic acolytes as well as the example of Enoch Powell in pioneering a new style of politics, seeking to occupy 'common ground' with the people rather than the 'middle ground' of an autonomous political sphere, divorced from any organic connection with the public.[196] In their emphasis on consciousness and ideology, as well as their concern to ground politics in questions of morality and culture, rather than purely material questions, the New Right's ideological trajectory resembled that of the New Left. We are thus left with the intriguing possibility that the establishment of a new hegemonic politics, described by neo-Marxist academics, was

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[195] Radhika Desai, 'Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas: Think-Tanks and the Thatcherite Hegemony', *New Left Review* 203 (1994), pp.27-64, at p.51.

[196] See J. Enoch Powell, *A Nation Not Afraid* (London: Batsford, 1965); idem., *Freedom and Reality* (London: Batsford, 1969); Rex Collings (ed.), *Reflections: Selected Writings and Speeches of Enoch Powell* (London: Bellow Publishing, 1992).

in fact a self-conscious process in the hands of the New Right, informed at least in part by their own engagement with New Left ideas.

Chapter Three: The New Right in Opposition

The Empress Ballroom of the Winter Gardens in Blackpool provided the setting, on 10 October 1975, for Margaret Thatcher, the neophyte leader of the Conservative Party, to declare that Britain had reached a 'turning point' in its long history. Summoning a 'decisive act of will', she called on Conservatives to declare 'enough' and renounce the failed compromises of the past.[1] Indeed, this was a speech partly calculated to tacitly undermine the claims of her embittered predecessor - whose presence in Blackpool remained powerful - to the leadership of the party. With the assistance of the new chairman of the CRD, Angus Maude, and the playwright Ronnie Millar, two men who had endured a difficult relationship with Heath, Thatcher sought to win over those still unconvinced of her leadership credentials.[2] In a subtle rebuke to the approach of her recently deposed predecessor as leader, she affirmed that her policies and programme would not be 'a list of unrelated items' (*à la* Heath); rather, they would form 'a total vision' of the sort of country she hoped to see.[3] 'Let us proclaim our faith', she urged, in a peroration more akin to a religious sermon than a political address.[4]

Quasi-religious rhetoric like this undoubtedly fostered a sense that the Conservative Party had embraced an ideological fundamentalism, which constituted a sharp break from the Heathite past. However, recent monographs, based on extensive archival research, have cast doubt upon the degree to which this rhetorical

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[1] Margaret Thatcher, *Let Our Children Grow Tall: Selected Speeches, 1975-1977* (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 1977), p.38.

[2] Heath's Chief Publicity Officer, Geoffrey Tucker, had invited Millar to assist Heath with his speeches after hearing him criticize the party's approach to public relations at a dinner hosted by Sir Michael Fraser. Millar and Heath, however, did not enjoy a successful working relationship. See Richard Cockett, 'The Party Publicity and the Media', in Anthony Seldon and Stuart Ball (eds), *Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.544-77, at pp.568-69.

[3] Thatcher, *Let Our Children Grow Tall*, p.33.

[4] Ibid., p.38.

shift was paralleled by a concomitant revolution in party policy. Adrian Williamson has repudiated what he terms the 'ideological capture' model in the historiography of 'Thatcherism'.[5] He emphasizes how much of the 'Thatcherite' agenda of supply-side reform emerged during Heath's period as leader and how the party's policymakers remained ambivalent towards statutory wage control and denationalization when it returned to office in 1979. In many ways, the Conservatives were swimming with the tide in their economic policymaking. 'Practical monetarism', limiting the growth of the money supply alongside other measures to reduce inflation, was part of what Peter Jay described as the 'the New Realism', adopted by Denis Healey after the breakdown of the Labour Government's 'Social Contract' with the unions.[6] In fact, as Duncan Needham and Aled Davies have demonstrated, the Bank of England, Treasury and City of London converged around the use of monetary targets as the primary economic indicator as early as 1971, in the wake of the collapse of the Bretton Woods international exchange rate system.[7] Hence, far from imposing their own *a priori* ideological schemes upon the British economy, politicians were only one part of a complex network of agents in the policymaking process and were forced to react to the material exigencies engendered by the evolution of Britain's position in the world economy. From this perspective, rather than being a dramatic caesura in British politics, the approach of the Thatcher governments was merely a continuation, or perhaps acceleration, of longstanding trends in Britain's political economy.

Nevertheless, recognition of the complexity and piecemeal nature of policy change should not obscure the reality that there was something significantly different about the Conservative Party's approach to political leadership after 1975. Williamson's focus on the subtleties of economic policymaking, especially within

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[5] Adrian Williamson, *Conservative Economic Policymaking and the Birth of Thatcherism, 1964-1979* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[6] Ibid., p.109.

[7] Duncan Needham, *UK Monetary Policy from Devaluation to Thatcher, 1967-1982* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Aled Davies, *The City of London and Social Democracy: The Political Economy of Finance in Britain, 1959-1979* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

the Policy Groups and CRD, does not capture the more abstract intellectual adjustment pushed by figures from outside the traditional policymaking organs of the party.

Thus far, we have examined the activities of a diffuse cluster of 'New Right' polemicists and proto-insurgents, which was coalescing, by the mid-1970s, into a self-conscious movement aspiring to practical influence. They were united by a shared conviction that the re-establishment of Conservative political leadership was contingent upon a concerted effort to transform the climate of public opinion and the terms of political debate in Britain. In retrospect, many of those early New Right figures - most patently Enoch Powell - failed to achieve *direct* practical influence over the Conservative Party leadership. However, following the collapse of the Heath government, a successful attempt *was* made. Regardless of the motives of Conservative MPs voting in the 1975 party leadership election, it is clear that the popular myth that Margaret Thatcher came from nowhere to win is false.[8] She was the candidate backed by Alfred Sherman's Centre for Policy Studies. After the Centre's co-founder, Sir Keith Joseph, ruled out a leadership challenge in light of the controversy aroused by his comments on the 'balance of our…human stock' at Edgbaston the previous October, Thatcher, as Vice-Chairman, was next in line to challenge Heath.[9]

This chapter focuses on the work of the CPS, the central node uniting likeminded thinkers from politics, business, journalism and academia. Through its influence over Thatcher's leadership, the Centre attempted to institutionalize a project to reshape the climate of opinion in Britain. This effort culminated in John

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[8] Mark Wickham-Jones has convincingly argued that Thatcher's victory represented a decisive vote in favour of a change in direction, rather than an 'accident'. The argument that 'momentum' from the first ballot guaranteed Thatcher's victory is dubious and her association with Keith Joseph and the CPS was well known amongst Conservative MPs. See Mark Wickham-Jones, 'Right Turn: A Revisionist Account of the 1975 Conservative Party Leadership Election', *Twentieth Century British History* 8 (1997), pp.74-89.

[9] Sir Keith Joseph, Speech at Edgbaston, 19 October 1974, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/101830 [hereafter MTFW].

Hoskyns and Norman Strauss's 'Stepping Stones' programme - an ambitious, albeit incremental, strategy to transform voters' 'Mental Sets'. Such a transformation, they believed, was a prerequisite for the election of a Conservative government with the capacity to 'reverse the trend'.

Alfred Sherman was able to establish himself as the leading and archetypal member of a network of 'para-politicians', committed to transforming the climate of public opinion in order to facilitate the adoption of previously unpalatable economic reforms and to catalyse a broader moral rejuvenation of British society.[10] A Jewish immigrant and veteran of the Spanish Civil War, Sherman renounced his youthful Marxism in favour of a journalistic career in Britain, writing first on Balkan affairs and later on local government.[11] With close links to the economic liberals of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) as well as the more traditionalist Conservatives of *The Daily Telegraph*, Sherman married a virulent anti-socialism with a post-materialist belief in the autonomy of ideas and culture. His nominalist theories that 'Ideas and images lag behind changing reality' and that 'Words continue to be used with their original overtones long after their real content has changed beyond recognition' informed the *modus operandi* of the CPS.[12] Rather than being preoccupied with the minutiae of policy detail, Sherman defined the CPS's role as being that of a 'trail-blazer', overcoming the constraints of what he considered to be a hostile climate of public opinion.[13]

There were, therefore, two distinct endeavours committed to the preparation of the Conservative Party for a return to government. While the Shadow Cabinet and those around the CRD cautiously negotiated debates around political economy,

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[10] Alfred Sherman and Mark Garnett, *Paradoxes of Power: Reflections on the Thatcher Interlude* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2005), p.50.
[11] Dennis Kavanagh, 'Sherman, Alfred (1919-2006)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Jan 2011 [https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-97388?rskey=AYqUXa&result=1, accessed 21 May 2020].
[12] Alfred Sherman, *The Newest Profession* (London: Aims for Freedom and Enterprise, 1978).
[13] Alfred Sherman, Note on role of CPS ('Our Second Birthday Party. Two Candles to Shed Light'), MTFW (111927).

Alfred Sherman and his associates gained the ear of Conservatives, like Joseph and Maude, who were disillusioned with the technocratic approach of the Heath years. This divide between the circumspect approach to policy-making adopted by the CRD and the populist public relations strategy of the CPS has often been taken to exemplify an ideological bifurcation within the party between tendencies that would later be branded as 'wet' and 'dry'. Tensions between these two groups did undoubtedly emerge during Thatcher's first administration; however, to present them as two ideological factions in the 1970s is to distort what was a more complex inter-relationship. Upon the foundation of the CPS, Sherman did not necessarily consider the Conservatives to have been *ideologically* unsound under Heath's leadership. '[W]hatever the merits and shortcomings of the 1970-74 government', he argued in 1976, 'many of its difficulties stemmed from the prevailing climate of opinion'.[14] Government, in Sherman's mind, did not take place in a political vacuum whereby rationally devised policies could be implemented without regard to circumstances. The necessity of electoral support and intellectual legitimacy circumscribed freedom of manoeuvre. The policy reversals and recourse to state intervention by the Heath government were therefore understandable in the circumstances of the early 1970s. Nevertheless, this did not mean that the Conservative Party was obliged to accept these constraints passively. Given that Sherman, and those of like mind, considered political ideas to be autonomous of any material determinants, it followed that politicians ought to be able to transform the climate of public opinion by means of changing the terms of political debate and, as it were, remoulding political discourse.

The CPS's communications strategy carefully cultivated an impression of 'discontinuity'. Indeed, declarations that Britain had reached 'a watershed in our national existence' and that 'the tide is beginning to turn' were repeated tropes in the speeches of Thatcher and Joseph.[15] It was essential, in their minds, to distance the

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Joseph, Speech at Edgbaston, MTFW(101830); Margaret Thatcher, 'The New Renaissance', Speech to the Zurich Economic Society, in Margaret Thatcher, *Let Our Children Grow Tall*, pp.93-101, at p.93.

party's new leadership from the failures of the Heath government in order to ensure that the Conservatives were no longer seen as the same 'transitory, ephemeral and appeasing' institution, incapable of overcoming the endemic problems of Britain's economy and social fabric.[16] Establishing a new image as a cohort of clear-sighted politicians, possessed of the 'specific qualities of firmness and conviction' necessary to succeed, was deemed to be a prerequisite for changing the terms of the political debate away from the compromise and vacillation of what came to be known as the 'consensus' years.[17] Joseph's famous admission, in the foreword to a 1975 collection of his speeches, that 'it was only in April 1974 that I was converted to Conservatism', should thus be seen in this light, as part of a contrived strategy to convey an impression of rupture from the political past.[18] As Andrew Denham and Mark Garnett have argued, Joseph's extravagant claims of a Damascene conversion exaggerated the degree to which his political preferences had altered.[19] Supply-side reform and the promotion of entrepreneurialism had always been at the forefront of his preoccupations. However, the belief of his biographers that his rhetorical self-flagellation satisfied a psychological need to summon 'moral courage' to recommit himself to political campaigning, whilst no doubt containing a large element of truth, underestimates the degree to which such admissions were part of a conscious strategy of the New Right.[20] The CPS hoped, by means of their public relations strategy, to inaugurate a new political era in which the constraints that had impeded Conservative governments in the past could be evaded and the terms of British political debate overhauled.

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[16] Keith Joseph paper, 'Our Tone of Voice and Our Tasks', 7 December 1976, The Papers of Baroness Thatcher LG, OM, FRS, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge [hereafter TP], THCR 2/6/1/160.

[17] Papers by Norman Strauss, 1976, The Papers of Sir John Hoskyns, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge [hereafter HP], HOSK 1/6.

[18] Keith Joseph, *Reversing the Trend: A Critical Re-appraisal of Conservative Economic and Social Policies: Seven Speeches* (Chichester: Barry Rose, 1975), p.4.

[19] Andrew Denham and Mark Garnett, *Keith Joseph* (Chesham: Acumen, 2001), p.250.

[20] Ibid., pp.237, 250.

3.1 A Changed Climate

Keith Joseph was by no means the only Conservative to publish a *mea culpa* after 1974. The electoral failures of that year prompted many of Heath's close supporters to reconsider the intellectual basis of their earlier approach to politics. Critiques, which had once been the preserve of a dissenting fringe, now entered the Conservative mainstream as a growing number began to question to adequacy of a materialistic electoral perspective. To many, the mid-1970s seemed like a period of intellectual ferment or even revivalism, in which a half-forgotten Tory approach to mass politics was rediscovered. Before we examine the attempts by Alfred Sherman and the CPS to formulate a new public relations strategy, it is worth reflecting further on the context in which the Centre was established. The apparent intellectual redundancy of the Heath government's approach to the 'politics of support' stimulated a growing demand for alternative ideas. This demand was made more urgent by the advent of a Labour government committed to a major extension of state ownership, price controls and planning agreements as well as an enlargement of the scope of collective bargaining.[21] Although many of the proposals for industrial intervention were ultimately watered down or never implemented, it did seem in the context of 1974-5 that the 'forward march of labour' was accelerating. It was in this context that Conservatives from a broad range of backgrounds came round to the idea that a 'battle of ideas' was necessary to recover the initiative in British politics.

Perhaps the most cogent expression of this intellectual reappraisal came from David Howell, a man who, during his time as editor of *Crossbow* magazine (1962-64) and Director of the CPC (1964-66), had played a prominent role in promoting the modernization strategy adopted by Heath.[22] Having attended meetings with Joseph, Thatcher and their associates at Joseph's house on Mulberry Walk in Chelsea,

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[21] 'Labour Party General Election Manifesto October 1974: Britain Will Win With Labour', in Iain Dale (ed.), *Labour Party General Election Manifestos 1990-1997* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.193-213.

[22] David Howell, *The Conservative Tradition and the 1980s: Three Gifts of Insight Restored* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1980).

Howell came to concur with their critique of the rationalistic outlook of the Heath years.[23] A laudable desire for bi-partisan accord on the part of Conservatives, he argued, had culminated in the party subscribing to 'something called "consensus"', a hegemonic intellectual framework in which 'economics came to dominate politics more than ever'.[24] The language and concepts of economics, envisaging society in terms of 'building blocks [and] aggregates', engendered a 'static view of society' that was alien to the traditional Conservative belief in 'the unplannable variety of human needs and ambitions, in the cellular formation of society'.[25] This 'static', inorganic philosophy, depicting society as being divided between capital owners and wage earners, nurtured the mythology of a two-class society that was so detrimental to the Conservative Party's electoral prospects. Moreover, this language of class and 'stratified corporate rituals' was so 'alien from everyday living' that it played a large role in nurturing the disaffection of voters from the political process.[26] Whereas he had once called for the application of scientific and modern management techniques to government, he now echoed those who had reviled this technocratic outlook. He called on Conservatives to drop the 'cantata' of social classes and revive 'a sort of romance with England'.[27] This was not merely an argument that the Conservatives should seek a popular appeal through jingoism, but was rather a repudiation of the universalism and materialism that had dominated the political thought of the past few decades. Unlike socialists, Howell argued, Conservatives should not 'wrap whole categories of people up in special parcels' – each nation was unique in its culture and historical development.[28] He now propounded a stridently anti-deterministic perspective, calling on the party to ignore those 'theoreticians' who suggested that

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[23] Denham and Garnett, *Keith Joseph*, p.238.
[24] Howell, *The Conservative Tradition and the 1980s*, p.1.
[25] Ibid., pp.2-5.
[26] Ibid., p.5.
[27] Ibid., p.6.
[28] Ibid., p.6.

political outcomes were 'determined by the forces of this or that'.[29] Indeed, he professed his belief in what a social scientist might term the relative autonomy of political discourse, professing that politicians could 'catch and articulate the feeling of a changing world' as well as 'shape and steady its progress'.[30]

It was not just policy wonks like Howell who were reassessing their political assumptions. Arguments that had once been the preserve of eccentrics at Peterhouse and *The Spectator* began, following the electoral defeats of 1974, to enter the party mainstream. One man, who in many ways defined mainstream Conservatism, was the historian of the party, Robert Blake. His survey, *The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill* (1970), was something of a paean to consensual, reformist Conservatism.[31] Yet, by 1976, even Lord Blake had come round to the view that the party needed to alter its approach. Despite being an erstwhile supporter of Heath, Blake endorsed some of the critiques of the Heath government in an address to the Conservative Philosophy Group. Although he pronounced the charges that the Heath government had deviated from traditional Conservatism to be 'much exaggerated', he accepted that there was a grain of truth in the accusations.[32] Blake expressed partial agreement with the arguments of Lord Coleraine, contending that while a shift to the left was correct and inevitable in the days of Rab Butler, in the changed circumstances of the 1970s, the Conservatives' pursuit of the middle ground had left them sounding like a mere echo of the left.[33] Now, like many other members of the

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[29] Ibid., p.8. While this barb was presumably directed at Marxist social scientists, Howell's repudiation of 'theoreticians' was a striking reversal in attitude from his earlier calls for the application of new techniques and 'scientific clarity' to politics. See David Howell, 'Towards Stability', in *Conservatism Today: Four Personal Points of View by Robert Blake, Peregrine Worsthorne, David Howell, Nigel Lawson* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1966), pp.34-46, at pp.42-3.

[30] Howell, *The Conservative Tradition and the 1980s*, p.8.

[31] Robert Blake, *The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill: Based on The Ford Lectures, Delivered Before the University of Oxford in the Hilary Term of 1968* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970).

[32] Robert Blake, *Conservatism in an Age of Revolution* (London: Churchill Press, 1976), p.18.

[33] Ibid., pp.9-11. John Charmley has highlighted the subtle change in Blake's reading of the post-war years in the second edition of his history of the Conservative Party, published in 1985. See John Charmley, 'Tories and Conservatives', in David Brown, Gordon Pentland and Robert Crowcroft (eds),

CPG, he recognized the need to make a 'major effort to form public opinion', instead of passively following it. Citing Keith Joseph, Blake argued that Conservatives must 'eschew the very language of class'; instead they should accentuate issues that united the country across class divides.[34] The Heath government's failure had exposed the fact that rationally devised policy was not a sufficient basis upon which to establish Conservative government. Leadership and rhetorical skill was required for Conservatives to break out of their reactive habit and recapture political initiative.

Blake returned to these themes in an essay of the same year entitled 'A Changed Climate' in which he mused on the failure of the Heath government to achieve its desired liberalization of the British economy. Like Alfred Sherman, Blake attributed the government's difficulties to the fact that they 'embarked in 1970 on a new course which did not *at that time* – and this is a point of key importance – appear intellectually reputable'.[35] Having observed the Heath government apparently yield to pressure and diverge from its original goals, Blake had become cognizant of the importance of a propitious intellectual climate in facilitating political change. It was not necessarily that politicians were unduly deferential to the opinions of academics in ivory towers, but Blake sensed that intellectual ideas and concepts 'in some mysterious way' filtered down to the wider populace.[36] Without an intellectual mandate, it was difficult for a party to succeed electorally. The Conservatives' victory in 1970 was unusual in this respect, arising, Blake suspected, out of public discontent with rising prices and governmental incompetence. It had, however, meant that the party achieved office without any real mandate for change - they held political office but not political power. Clearly Blake had by no means developed a systematic analysis of the relationship between the climate of public opinion and the possibilities for political change, but, like many others, he possessed a vague sense

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The Oxford Handbook of Modern British Political History, 1800-2000 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp.306-324, at p.318.

[34] Ibid., p.15.

[35] Robert Blake and John Patten (eds), *The Conservative Opportunity* (London: Macmillan, 1976), p.3.

[36] Ibid., p.10.

that the terms of the debate would have to change for the Conservatives to escape the political cul-de-sac in which they had found themselves.

In Margaret Thatcher many disaffected Conservatives hoped they had found a leader who could re-establish that ineffable connection with the public that had been lost in the Heath years. Patrick Cosgrave, no doubt still rejoicing at Heath's defenestration, wrote a popular biography of the new party leader, heralding her as a potential tribune of the people. Unlike the detached policy wonks of Heath's administration, he portrayed Thatcher as possessing a genuine sense for the instincts and everyday concerns of the British people. Unfortunately, Cosgrave bemoaned, this populist potential was often frustrated by the lack of time for reflection afforded by Thatcher's packed schedule and also by the ineptitude of Conservative Central Office, which was apparently incapable of conveying her 'exceptional coherence and moral power' to the media.[37] Large parts of the press doubted her political substance when compared to older and more experienced opponents like Wilson and Callaghan.[38] Nevertheless, Cosgrave suggested that, unlike them, Thatcher was uniquely immune from becoming what one might term today 'out of touch'. The primary reason for this was her gender. He mused that 'Perhaps the detachment from the ordinary social intercourse of politics which her sex imposed on her has preserved for her an uncommon awareness of the separateness of the identity of the politician from the identity of the people.'[39] While Cosgrave's analysis certainly drew upon stereotypes about feminine qualities of empathy, it was undoubtedly true that Thatcher's gender was a useful attribute in conveying an impression of change from the politicians of the past. She was presented by her acolytes as something of an insurgent, shaking up the old boy's club of Whitehall with the everyday home truths that they had lost sight of. By this means, they believed that she could reconcile the

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[37] Patrick Cosgrave, *Margaret Thatcher: A Tory and Her Party* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), pp.20, 23-4.

[38] John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher, Volume 1: The Grocer's Daughter* (London: Pimlico, 2000), pp.286-7.

[39] Cosgrave, *Margaret Thatcher* p.132.

population with a political system whose language and attitudes had become ever more divorced from those of voters.

In his new work as a special adviser to the Leader of the Opposition, contributing heavily to her speechwriting process, Cosgrave helped to cultivate this populist image for Thatcher. In a draft article for *The Sun*, Cosgrave sought to associate Thatcher with the wisdom of the masses, which had in his mind been frustrated by the fetters of an overinflated state. He advised her to profess her belief that 'the greatness of our country has always been in its people, not in its governments'.[40] It is often written that the New Right viewed populist appeals through the tabloid press and popular broadcasting as key media for reaching C2 'swing voters'.[41] Polling reports for the CRD certainly pushed this targeted agenda, which was adopted assiduously by Gordon Reece, the Director of Publicity.[42] Reece encouraged Thatcher to appear on 'popular' programmes like *The Jimmy Young Show* in order to reach the all-important C2s.[43] However, within the New Right, there was a conscious effort to repudiate the established notion that these voters represented the 'middle ground' who could be best captured by a 'moderate' appeal to bi-partisanship or 'middle way' policies, compromising between the agendas of the left and right. Having taken on board the arguments of figures like Maude and Coleraine regarding the chimerical nature of the 'middle ground', they instead sought to occupy what Joseph termed the 'common ground', establishing a reciprocal connection with the aspirations of the people, rather than feeling constrained by the axioms of an 'unrepresentative political establishment'.[44] This concept, which Joseph adumbrated to the Oxford Union in December 1975, lay behind the repeated

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[40] Patrick Cosgrave, Draft article for *The Sun*, undated c.1975-1976, TP, THCR 2/6/1/13A.

[41] For example Richard Cockett, 'The Party, Publicity and the Media', in Anthony Seldon and Stuart Ball (eds), *Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.544-77.

[42] See for example the BMBR Survey, 'General Election – October 1974', March 1975, TP, THCR 2/6/1/188.

[43] Cockett, 'The Party, Publicity and the Media', p.573.

[44] Keith Joseph, 'Towards a Tory Vision of Britain', *Books and Bookmen* (August 1976), THCR 2/6/1/173.

assertions in Thatcher's speeches and articles that the Conservative Party's convictions were held 'instinctively held by a majority of working people'.[45] Thus, paradoxically, the New Right targeted a particular class of voters with a message that denied the significance of class divisions. Yet, this was not necessarily the result of confusion or cross-purposes within the party. As we shall see, those around the CPS debated issues of class and populism extensively and self-consciously during the Conservatives' opposition years, culminating in an approach that employed populist rhetoric as a transformative, rather than merely descriptive, instrument.

Though few of his ideas were original, Sir Keith Joseph, in his roles as Director of the CPS and the Advisory Committee on Policy (ACP), acted as a figurehead for the intellectual 'conversion' of his party towards this approach. He, like Howell, repudiated the rationalistic and materialistic approach of the previous regime and advocated a return to what he had come to understand as a 'traditional' Conservative approach. His role was that of an intermediary, channelling the ideas of the nascent New Right movement into the upper echelons of the Conservative Party. Having experienced the failures of the Heath government and having subsequently consorted with many of its intellectual critics on the right, Joseph evangelized for a more discursive approach to politics. Although many have suggested that he equated 'traditional' Conservatism with neo-liberal economics, Joseph was clear that he meant something quite different.[46] Returning to Conservative traditions, he wrote in a 1978 article on his 'Tory Vision of Britain', did not mean 'adducing a set of maxims, calling them the Conservative Tradition, and then applying them mechanistically'.[47] On the contrary, Joseph felt that the Conservative tradition

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[45] Keith Joseph, 'The Quest for Common Ground', in Keith Joseph *Stranded on the Middle Ground?: Reflections on Circumstances and Policies* (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 1976), pp.19-33; Margaret Thatcher, 'How the Tories Will Face the Unions', *Sunday Telegraph*, 15 May 1977, MTFW (103384).

[46] Ian Gilmour, *Dancing with Dogma: Britain under Thatcherism* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Ian Gilmour and Mark Garnett, *Whatever Happened to the Tories: The Conservatives since 1945* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998).

[47] Joseph, 'Towards a Tory Vision of Britain'.

developed from precedent, ensuring that the nation's institutions reflected the national character, rather than the *a priori* theories of detached intellectuals. In making this argument, he explicitly drew upon the organicist thought of Burke and Disraeli.[48] Yet, rather than stressing conservation and the limitation of reform to organic evolution, Joseph was inclined to recommend an effort on the part of government to reshape public behaviour. Believing that socialist policies had undermined national characteristics such as self-restraint and work ethic, he argued that government had to set a framework to encourage positive behaviours and reverse the effects of 'state-subsidized demoralisation'.[49] It is unclear whether, in making this argument, Joseph assumed that individuals were rational actors, responding predictably to the policy framework in which they found themselves. If so, one might argue that this effort to reshape public behaviour through legislation was incompatible with his concurrent invocation of anti-rationalist organicism.[50] However, if 'rational actor' economics were on Joseph's agenda, they were not its entirety. In fact, he sought to direct politics away from a preoccupation with economics, arguing that 'when economics dominates, the nation shrinks and withers'.[51] Joseph appears to have genuinely believed that free market economics constituted an integral part of an anti-materialist, anti-rationalist agenda.

Of course one should not expect Joseph's polemical articles to be consistently reasoned philosophical treatises. His writing exhibited the influences of an eclectic array of thinkers and associates, from the fatalistic anti-materialism of his longstanding colleague Angus Maude,[52] to the free market economic thinking of

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Such is the argument of Andrew Denham and Mark Garnett in their biography of Joseph. Denham and Garnett, *Keith Joseph*, pp.434-35.

[51] Joseph, 'Towards a Tory Vision of Britain'.

[52] Shortly after Thatcher's election as Leader of the Opposition, Joseph collaborated with Maude to produce some 'notes towards the definition of policy' for the Shadow Cabinet meeting of 11 April 1975. In it, they bemoaned successive governments' 'almost exclusive obsession with economics' and failure to appreciate that a 'healthy economy is possible only in a healthy body politic'. Keith Joseph and Angus Maude, Shadow Cabinet: Circulated Paper ('Notes Towards the Definition of Policy', 4 April 1975, MTFW (110098), p.1.

Alan Walters.[53] Yet, while the policy preoccupations of these critics of the Heath government varied, they were united in their belief that the Conservatives would have to reshape the climate of opinion and establish a new 'common ground' if they were to have any hope of governing successfully in future. In the context of electoral failure and Heath's fruitless attempts to pursue national unity through inter-partisan co-operation, it was clear why many Conservatives felt they had lost control of the political agenda. These concerns inspired informal conversations during the early months of 1974 between Keith Joseph, Alfred Sherman and Alan Walters - joined at times by Thatcher and Howell - at the flats of Joseph and Sherman in London.[54] Out of these meetings came the initiative of the CPS. Henceforth, the disparate array of outsiders who had been fulminating against the foundering of the technocratic Conservative Party machine would be able to access a bridgehead through which they could 'convert' the party to their political approach. From this initiative emerged, for the first time, a systematic and co-ordinated attempt to reshape the climate of public opinion. The CPS aimed to crystallize what had been primarily diffuse (and often polemical) discussions of an alternative approach to political leadership into a viable and practical strategy to engender political change.

3.2 Trail-Blazers

The CPS was never conceived as a 'think-tank' in the conventional sense of the term. Its role was political, rather than intellectual, transforming the climate of public opinion in order to remove the constraints that had impinged upon previous Conservative governments. As Alfred Sherman, the Centre's Director of Studies, opined, it was not a research institute dedicated to converting the Conservative Party to particular policies; rather, it 'took it for granted that the Party would be broadly in

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[53] Walters apparently gave Joseph a less-than-friendly reception, holding him partly responsible for the failure of the 1970 - 1974 government to implement the sort of reforms advocated by the IEA. Denham and Garnett, *Keith Joseph*, p.238.

[54] Richard Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-revolution 1931-1983* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), pp.233-37; Denham and Garnett, *Keith Joseph*, pp.238-41.

agreement with the direction we seek to take'.[55] Policy implementation, not formulation, was their primary struggle. Richard Cockett, in his history of free-market think tanks, implied that Sherman was being disingenuous in denying that the CPS was instituted in order to fight the battle for economic liberalism within the party.[56] Certainly, there is some truth in this accusation, given that the CPS worked closely with the IEA in order to propagate what they initially termed 'social market economics'.[57] Moreover, much of Sherman's correspondence came to be preoccupied with the need to outflank the 'inveterate anti-Margareteers' and 'fainéant pseudo-Disraelians' in the party.[58] Ultimately, the fact that Sherman and his colleagues needed to send so many memoranda clarifying the role and objectives of the CPS indicates they were perhaps never able to establish a clear and consistent role within the party. Nevertheless, if one looks to the early mission statements produced by Sherman, one can get a sense of the philosophy behind the Centre's foundation.

To portray Sherman as a neo-liberal ideologue would be a misrepresentation of his outlook. From his perspective, free market reforms were means to the end of a moral revival of British society. Economic liberty was a prerequisite for the spontaneous development of an interdependent society in which moral values and national culture were disseminated. Through want of economic liberty over the past few decades, he believed that such reciprocal bonds had been severed, leaving British society's moral values and culture to be dictated by a 'new establishment' of public sector and educational institutions. Indeed, Sherman's thought closely

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[55] Sherman, Note on role of CPS.

[56] Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p.239.

[57] The term 'social market economy' was adopted in reference to the liberal economic policies pursued by the West German economics minister, Ludwig Erhard, during the Federal Republic's '*wirtschaftswunder*' (economic miracle) in the 1950s. The term might also have been employed to stress the compatibility of liberal economic reforms and social responsibility. However, upon the urgings of William and Shirley Letwin, the term was dropped on the grounds that it obfuscated the importance of economic freedom. See Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p.253; Denham and Garnett, *Keith Joseph*, p.241.

[58] Alfred Sherman memorandum to MT ("Stand by to Repel Coalition - Press-gangs"), 1 June 1978, MTFW (111993); Alfred Sherman letter to MT (initiatives), 25 October 1977, MTFW (111990).

resembled the organicist philosophy of Tory philosophers like Oakeshott and Scruton, albeit deriving from different sources. One such source was the personalist philosophy of the Sicilian priest and Christian Democrat Don Luigi Sturzo.[59] Although Sturzo's personalism was individualist, in that it stressed the unitary and transcendent character of the individual, it also emphasized the role of reciprocal encounter and intersubjectivity in the transmission of moral values through the generations.[60] This social organicism was evident in a memorandum Sherman sent to his colleagues a few months after the CPS's foundation, in which he dismissed the idea that the Centre should have a liberal economic 'credo'. He insisted that they were 'Tories first, (economic) liberals only second'.[61] In Sherman's mind, Tories, unlike liberal ideologues, did not believe that the elimination of restrictions on economic activity would be sufficient for the creation of a good society. In fact, the ability of individuals to thrive in a free society was contingent upon 'other assumptions regarding man', including his (or her) family structure, values, education, eschatology and the climate of opinion.[62] Freedom was *not* a moralizing force *per se*; its desirability was contingent upon the pre-existence of a shared framework of moral values and culture. Sherman later outlined his philosophy more explicitly, arguing that the economy was not an objective reality, subject to universal laws, but rather 'an intellectual, political and emotional construct which changes with time, experience and perspective'.[63] He therefore dismissed the assumption that economic liberalism could be advanced as a 'verity independent of time and circumstances', professed with 'theological certainty'.[64] For free market reforms to

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[59] Sherman cited Sturzo's *Moralise Public Life* as the inspiration behind his draft of Keith Joseph's infamous Edgbaston speech, in which Joseph turned to issues of family morality. Sherman and Garnett, *Paradoxes of Power*, p.56.

[60] Flavio Felice, 'The Ethical Foundation of the Market Economy: A Reflection on Economic Personalism in the Thought of Luigi Sturzo', *Journal of Markets and Morality* 4 (2001), pp.217-39.

[61] Alfred Sherman memorandum to CPS colleagues (Credo), 18 November 1974, MTFW (111907), p.2.

[62] Ibid., p.2.

[63] Sherman and Garnett, *Paradoxes of Power*, p.64.

[64] Sherman memorandum to CPS colleagues (Credo), pp.2,6.

have their desired effect, it would first be necessary to 'remoralise public life', equipping individuals with the necessary outlook to flourish in a liberalized economy. In this sense, Sherman sought to replace the physical constraints on an individual's behaviour imposed by the state with the ideological constraints of a shared moral and behavioural code – in other words, what Maurice Cowling might have termed a 'public doctrine'. Indeed, Sherman's outlook was profoundly relativistic. As he recalled in 2005, his break with his youthful Marxism came upon the realization that 'socio-economic processes had an autonomy of their own'.[65] Armed with that knowledge, his primary preoccupation was not on material economic reforms, but rather on transforming the superstructure of ideas and attitudes.

The influence of the CPS and its preoccupation with transforming public discourse accorded an unprecedented degree of importance to speechwriting. Sherman worked closely with John Hoskyns, Ronnie Millar and Thatcher's Parliamentary Private Secretaries, John Stanley and Adam Butler, crafting the leader's speeches at her home on Flood Street in Chelsea.[66] In their search for inspiration, Thatcher's speechwriters drew upon an eclectic array of intellectual sources. The reams of articles accumulated in Thatcher's papers provide an insight into the profoundly anti-positivistic outlook that informed their approach to public relations. For example, a *New Society* article by Paul Wilding, entitled 'Objections to Social Science', bemoaned the prevalence of environmental determinism in discussions of issues like crime and poverty and the way in which solutions were always sought in altering structures and planning rather than through moral leadership. He called instead for the reinsertion of 'idealism and humanitarianism' into sociological and political discourse, mocking the idea that political conflicts could be resolved by dispassionate experts without reference to moral and cultural values.[67] The New Right sought out academics that upheld the autonomy of culture

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[65] Sherman and Garnett, *Paradoxes of Power*, pp.36-7.
[66] Ibid., pp.84-5.
[67] Paul Wilding, 'Objections to Social Science', *New Society*, 8 April 1976, THCR 5/1/3/1.

and the agency of the individual in making choices independently of material determinants. Julius Gould of the University of Nottingham was one such academic who contributed papers to Thatcher's speechwriters. From his perspective, the discipline of sociology could be divided into two strands, one valuable and the other malign. Gould argued that the latter group, whose forefathers were Auguste Comte and Karl Marx, possessed a scientific certainty that the future was predetermined, hence absolving individuals of responsibility for their behaviour and the choices they made. However, the former group, following Max Weber, believed in the formative role of values in guiding human activity.[68] They offered what the historian Hugh Trevor-Roper termed a 'sociology in movement', appreciating the role of inherited traditions in guiding social development.[69] For Trevor-Roper, the chief failing of successive British governments was their lack of due deference to history. An alliance between philistinism and 'progress' had promoted a governing philosophy that paid no regard to the social and intellectual context of the society that they sought to govern. In a paper he sent to Thatcher, Trevor-Roper explained that this philosophy, adopted by figures like Sidney and Beatrice Webb and Neville Chamberlain, sought all useful knowledge in the present.[70] In other words, they were rationalists who employed *a priori* deductive reasoning, without regard to tradition, to advocate for reformist schemes. At this stage, the New Right were preoccupied with reversing this ahistorical philosophy of government and returning to a style of leadership which made greater recourse to moral and rhetorical guidance than legislative intervention.

Sherman fed Thatcher with articles and papers stressing the importance of gaining influence over the 'knowledge industry' in order to contest the apparent stranglehold of the left-wing intelligentsia and their amoral positivist philosophy. For example, he sent an article on the work of the American philosopher Michael Novak,

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[68] Julius Gould, 'Four Cheers for Pragmatism: Thoughts on Sociology and Politics', *Encounter*, October 1976, TP, THCR 5/1/3/3.
[69] Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'What is Historical Knowledge for us Today?', TP, THCR 5/1/3/4.
[70] Ibid.

which reinforced his message regarding the autonomy and malleability of culture. Novak went as far as to profess that, in an age of mass media and education, 'the balance of world affairs is now decided in the realm of ideas and symbols'.[71] Television in particular had created a 'most people think' atmosphere, allowing those who controlled the media establishment to control the limits of political discourse.[72] The challenge for the New Right was to contest the preponderance of left-wing ideas propagated through the media and the education system. It was therefore no surprise that senior Conservatives obsessed about the unfavourable output of media sources and higher education. Keith Joseph was apoplectic when, in 1976, the BBC invited J. K. Galbraith to produce a series of thirteen broadcasts on his economic theories, which, according to Joseph amounted to 'half-baked' socialism.[73] In spite of the contempt in which Joseph held Galbraith's views, he nevertheless regarded him as 'about the most dangerous intellectual opponent we have on the economic front' by virtue of the fact that he was 'a powerful coiner of phrases' and 'damnably well known to a large proportion of the potentially floating section of the population'.[74] Left-wing thinkers appeared to have pursued a more effective strategy of propagating their ideas, resulting in them becoming accepted as the 'common sense' of the period. David Howell traced the intellectual ascendancy of this new 'cultural establishment' back to the publishing activity of the Fabians and Harold Wilson's establishment of the Open University.[75] He lamented that, since the days of G. E. Moore and L. T. Hobhouse, 'welfarism' had become a 'synthetic orthodoxy' disseminated by the Bloomsbury group and middle-class sociology students at the London School of Economics, resulting in the conflation of man's moral and

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[71] 'Television: Powerful Adversary of Capitalism', *Persuasion at Work* (February 1979), TP, THCR 2/6/1/225.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Keith Joseph letter to William Whitelaw, 17 March 1976, TP, THCR 2/1/1/37.

[74] Ibid.; Letter to William Whitelaw, 10 September 1976, TP, THCR 2/1/1/38.

[75] David Howell, Notes to Margaret Thatcher on 'Themes' for Young Conservatives speech, 3 February 1976, TP, THCR 2/1/1/33.

material welfare in the public mind.[76] For Sherman and those of like mind, the Conservatives had been guilty of an unquestioning adherence to the assumptions of this left-leaning intellectual orthodoxy. Given the anticipated electoral implications of disregarding intellectual orthodoxy, the only way to escape this trap was to transform or subvert it.

Populism, appealing over the heads of an intellectual 'establishment' to a purportedly virtuous public, was one means to subvert this intellectual orthodoxy. As we have seen, Thatcher, in her public speeches, continually asserted that the majority of the population shared her personal and her party's values. According to this narrative, the cloistered intellectual and political establishment, divorced from the values and sentiments of the people, did not adequately represent the 'commonsense' values of 'ordinary' people. Reading the internal deliberations of the New Right, one might get the impression that there was a degree of disingenuity in these appeals. For all the sincerity of Thatcher's faith in the virtue of the masses, her colleagues' and advisers' correspondence abounded with fears that the British people were irrevocably 'infected' with the 'poison' of socialism.[77] It could be that the New Right were employing a propaganda trick known as the imperative indicative, asserting that what they desired to happen was actually happening.[78] This could indeed have been the thinking behind Thatcher's claim that 'at long last Conservatives are winning the intellectual battle against Socialism'.[79]

It is certainly true that the New Right were extremely self-conscious in their populist strategy. In 1978, Sherman sent Thatcher some 'Notes on Populism', in which he described how the role of the Tories was to represent people's values and

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[76] Ibid. Ironically, Hobhouse drew upon a similar strand of idealist thought as Conservative organicist philosophers like John Casey and Michael Oakeshott.

[77] Speech fragment, c.1976-1977, TP, THCR 5/1/3/3.

[78] Kingsley Amis revealed he was using this 'communist propaganda trick' when he told the CPC Summer School at Christ Church, Oxford in July 1967 that the swing to the left amongst the intelligentsia had begun to reverse. Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim's Politics* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1968).

[79] Margaret Thatcher foreword to Blake, *Conservatism in an Age of Revolution.*

aspirations, rather than impose an elite-derived 'consensus'.[80] Although, in contemporary usage, the term 'populism' had come to have pejorative connotations, Sherman presented it as a positive strategy. Populist moods, he claimed, reflected political and ideological 'vacua', in which the public had become alienated from their political leaders. Yet, rather than uncritically accepting the naïveté and ignorance of the masses, Sherman distinguished between the ascription of 'wisdom' to the common man and belief in their infallibility.[81] It is this distinction that allowed Sherman to reconcile his fear that socialism was infecting the minds of the masses, with his faith in the fundamental soundness of popular instincts. He trusted that the people would respond to an appeal to what he imagined to be the inherited moral values of British society, but was equally aware of the role of political elites in validating or distorting these values. Politicians and the intellectual elite provided the language through which popular values and prejudices were articulated. If they failed to impart the requisite rhetorical tools or distorted political discourse, these latent popular instincts could be suppressed. Hence, by adopting this outlook, the New Right were able, paradoxically, to adopt a populist public relations strategy while maintaining a profoundly elitist conception of political leadership.

3.3 Class on the Brain

From the perspective of mid-1970s Britain, the emerging New Right were convinced that the prevailing political discourse systematically disadvantaged the Conservatives *vis-à-vis* their socialist opponents. The left had, according to Keith Joseph, proven more adept at 'modern witch-doctory', establishing the myths and semantics that structured the political imagination of voters.[82] The most pernicious and divisive of these myths from the New Right's perspective was the Marxist-inspired mythology of a society divided between the interests of the productive majority and a parasitic capitalist class, existing in a perpetual and inevitable state of class conflict. As Jon

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[80] Alfred Sherman, 'Notes on Populism', 3 May 1978, TP, THCR 2/6/1/226.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Joseph, 'Towards a Tory Vision of Britain'.

Lawrence and Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite have argued, sociological accounts that portray the 1970s as an era in which class distinctions blurred have obscured the extent to which, at that time, political discourse seemed to be saturated with 'languages of class'.[83] Sherman, in notes he provided for Thatcher for a speech on 'Class and Nation' in 1977, suggested that Marxists had succeeded in focusing attention on one aspect of people's lives at the expense of other imagined collective identities, such as membership of the nation.[84] Social class, like nationhood, was for the New Right not an economically predetermined structure; rather, it existed in the realm of mythology and semantics. Indeed, Margaret Thatcher's speech notes for her address to the Parliamentary Press Gallery in January 1977 contain references to Jacques Ellul, the French Christian anarchist who had influenced Angus Maude a decade earlier.[85] His work on 'the formation of men's attitudes' ran counter to past intellectual orthodoxies, which had treated individuals as rational actors responding to an anterior material reality, in stressing the malleability of their attitudes and predispositions. The implication of such theories, which provided succour to the New Right, was that effective propaganda could transform the climate of political debate, encouraging voters to consider their interests from an entirely different perspective. There was therefore nothing inevitable about Labour's purported in-built advantage in terms of class identification. Although more people at that time might have considered themselves to be 'naturally' Labour, this was not structurally predetermined.

Upon Thatcher's election as Leader of the Conservative Party, there was much talk in the media about her 'carefully corseted, middle-class' image.[86] For Ian

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[83] Jon Lawrence and Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Margaret Thatcher and the Decline of Class Politics' in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds) *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.132-47, at pp.132-3.

[84] Alfred Sherman, 'Possible Talk for Blenheim: Class and Nation', 11 July 1977, TP, THCR 2/6/1/228.

[85] Margaret Thatcher speech notes on the classless society (prepared for her speech to the Parliamentary Press Gallery), c.26 January 1977, TP, THCR 2/6/1/173.

[86] Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher, Volume 1*, p.286.

Gilmour, this association with the bourgeois minority would see the Conservatives 'retire behind a privet hedge', destined to be reduced to representing the constituencies of the Home Counties.[87] The New Right's response to such arguments was to launch a sustained attack on the notion that the majority of the British population did not share their so-called 'middle-class' values. In May 1977, Angus Maude wrote Thatcher a draft of an article entitled 'New Myths for Old', in which he wrote that what were contemptuously called 'middle-class values' were in fact 'instinctively held by a majority of working-class people'.[88] This accorded with what Lawrence and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite have termed the Thatcherites' attempt to 'ditch the class baggage', appealing to a wider social constituency.[89] Partly this was a product of necessity, escaping negative preconceptions of the leader and her party. However, this project went beyond 'One Nation' appeals to inter-class co-operation, eschewing the language of class in favour of what Sutcliffe-Braithwaite has identified as a new political language of 'ordinariness'.[90] In a revealing annotation to Maude's speech draft, Thatcher put a line through the adjective 'working-class' and inserted 'working people' instead.[91] Clearly, Thatcher was acutely aware of the detrimental effect that a politicized language of 'class' was having on the Conservatives' political prospects. The New Right engaged in a self-conscious project to recreate the party's social constituency, establishing a new popular conception of the social order in which the Conservatives represented the values and aspirations of a majority of 'ordinary' people.

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[87] Ibid.

[88] Angus Maude draft of 'New Myths For Old' [with MT's annotations], c. May 1977, TP, THCR 2/6/1/13B.

[89] Lawrence and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Margaret Thatcher and the Decline of Class Politics', p.132.

[90] Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Class, Community and Individualism in English Politics and Society, 1969-2000', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge (2014), pp.20-75. See also Amy Whipple, '"Ordinary People": The Cultural Origins of Popular Thatcherism in Britain, 1964-1979', unpublished PhD thesis, Northwestern University (2004).

[91] Angus Maude draft of 'New Myths For Old'.

Lawrence and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite have noted Alfred Sherman's rejection of the Marxist model of class division as chimerical.[92] CPS publications sought to debunk the idea that class barriers precluded social mobility in Britain. The Hungarian economist Peter Bauer wrote a pamphlet in which he claimed to demonstrate that there were 'no class barriers in access to wealth and management' in Britain, only barriers erected by bureaucratization, taxation and restrictive practices.[93] Yet, whilst he denied the existence of class barriers in structural terms, insisting on the openness of British business and institutions to people of all backgrounds, he recognized the pertinence of social distinctions, accepting that 'In this sense Britain has indeed always been a class society.'[94] Similarly, Sherman acknowledged that the idea of a 'classless society' was a 'will-o'-the-wisp', a 'Marxist chimera'.[95] Classlessness was impossible from their perspective, because in a free society social differences and the diversity of tastes would inevitably crystallize into status divisions. Keith Joseph likewise published on matters of class and egalitarianism. His understanding of class distinctions was not dissimilar from that of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. He accepted that differences in personalities are in part a reflection of 'unequal environments' and learned dispositions, which influenced attitudes towards the accumulation of financial capital.[96] However, Joseph denied the mutually reinforcing nature of the accumulation of economic capital and symbolic capital in precluding equality of opportunity in British society. Indeed, he seemed to consider a humble social background as an advantage *vis-à-vis* the middle class as a stimulus to entrepreneurialism. The British middle class, in Joseph's mind, were afflicted with a risk-averse mindset in contrast to the intense determination to improve one's standard of living instilled by the experience of hardship. Bauer, in his pamphlet,

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[92] Lawrence and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Margaret Thatcher and the Decline of Class Politics', p.134.

[93] P. T. Bauer, *Class on the Brain: The Cost of a British Obsession* (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 1978), CPA, PUB 106/17, pp.6-8.

[94] Ibid., p.9.

[95] Alfred Sherman, 'The Will-o-the-wisp of the Classless Society', TP, THCR 2/6/1/173.

[96] Keith Joseph and Jonathan Sumption, *Equality* (Chatham: W&J Mackay Ltf, 1979), pp.31-2.

bemoaned the loss of nerve of the middle class, produced by a sense of guilt for their wealth that was 'notable among the second or third generation of the industrial and commercial rich in a Protestant culture'.[97] Thus, if middle-class culture did inhibit the economic advancement of the working classes, it was through its disdain for wealth creation and *bien-pensant* support of collectivism, rather than through the direct denial of economic opportunities to them. The New Right's project was never the obliteration of class distinctions; rather, it was the reworking of class cultures.

The ostensible confidence of Thatcher and Joseph that the tide was turning against collectivism obscured their underlying pessimism that state welfare and moral permissiveness had produced a fundamentally sick society. Their aspiration for the 'unselfconscious *embourgeoisement* of the majority of the population'[98] was not rooted in a conviction that they were riding the wave of history.[99] On the contrary, their project was conceived as a proactive attempt to reverse the decline of bourgeois culture in Britain. On this subject, the CPS was informed by the work of Ferdynand Zweig, a social scientist who had advanced the concept of '*embourgeoisement*' a decade earlier.[100] However, in contrast to the sanguine tone of Zweig's earlier work, his pamphlet for the CPS, *The New Acquisitive Society* (1976), portrayed a much less healthy society.[101] The 'new acquisitiveness' of affluent

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[97] Bauer, *Class on the Brain*, p.13.

[98] 'The Middle-Class Struggle'*,* 24 August 1976, TP, THCR 2/6/1/173. Reading this summary of Patrick Hutber's *The Decline and Fall of the Middle Class and How it Can Fight Back* (London: Associated Business Programmes, 1976), Thatcher underlined the quoted section.

[99] In Thatcher's Zurich speech of March 1977, in which she declared her 'optimism' that the 'tide is beginning to turn against collectivism, socialism, dirigisme, call it what you will', she made clear that this direction of travel was not inevitable, qualifying her remark with an acknowledgement that the tide 'will not automatically float us to our desired destination'. Thatcher, 'The New Renaissance', Speech to the Zurich Economic Society, p.93.

[100] Ferdynand Zweig, *The Worker in an Affluent Society: Family Life and Industry* (London: Heinemann, 1961). Zweig's theory was critiqued by Goldthorpe et al.'s affluent worker study, which argued that the increased acquisitiveness and home-centredness of newly affluent manual workers did not amount to assimilation into the middle class but rather the 'normative convergence' of discrete social classes. See John Goldthorpe *et al.*, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968-1969).

[101] Ferdynand Zweig, *The New Acquisitive Society* (Chichester: Barry Rose for the Centre for Policy Studies, 1976).

workers, expressed through trade unionism and consumerism, was inseparable from the socially destructive tendency towards permissiveness. Material advancement was no longer so closely allied to the purported Protestant ethic of the Victorian era.[102] Indeed, in Zweig's account, a concomitant process of '*debourgeoisement*' paralleled the growing acquisitiveness of manual workers. As their employment became increasingly bureaucratized and unionized, the middle classes were losing their qualities of self-reliance, thrift and willingness to defer gratification. Moreover, having been 'profoundly affected by the provision of social services', the middle classes were an increasingly parasitic group, becoming preoccupied with their rights and demands upon the state rather than with their responsibilities.[103] Thus, although in retrospect social change might have contained within it the seeds of a new popular individualism, the New Right's reading of it was much more pessimistic than is commonly appreciated. Zweig did not prophesize that the Conservatives were on the brink of an electoral breakthrough by dint of the shrinking of the proletariat. Rather, he underlined the necessity of a 'new mental and spiritual climate of society' that would reverse the 'negative feedback' building up in the social organism.[104]

The CPS took on board Zweig's closing call for a 'major civic education campaign' to overcome the destructive tendencies of collective acquisitiveness and egalitarianism.[105] As part of his 'roving brief' in opposition, Keith Joseph famously toured Britain's universities, making over one hundred and fifty speeches on the deficiencies of socialism.[106] Moreover, he sought to recruit business managers to act as 'front-line myth-breakers' who would publicly challenge anti-capitalist orthodoxies.[107] Rather than viewing public support for collectivism as a rational response to material interests, Joseph considered it to be an irrational mythology,

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[102] Ibid., pp.9
[103] Ibid., pp.8, 50-1, 67-71.
[104] Ibid., p.142.
[105] Ibid., p.143.
[106] Denham and Garnett, *Keith Joseph*, pp.295-6.
[107] Sir Keith Joseph, *Business and the Climate of Opinion* (London: Foundation for Business Responsibilities, 1975), p.6.

which derived from a 'peculiar tradition of revolutionary Christian millenarianism'.[108] If the Conservatives were to capture the imagination of voters, it was imperative that they formulate their own mythology to challenge those of their opponents. Although they may, at times, have appeared to adhere to a mechanistic rational-choice approach to policy-making, in opposition at least, the New Right were perhaps more preoccupied with the irrational aspects of political behaviour. Joseph was clear that 'Of course, it would be easier if we could make our story romantic'.[109]

3.4 From Cloth Cap to Quango

The New Right exhibited rueful admiration for the Left's success in establishing their mythologies in the public mind. For Keith Joseph, it seemed that much of the public was living in a 'half-mythical world of class struggle, tolpuddle, the bourgeoisie grinding noses of the famished oppressed workers'.[110] This political narrative, propagated by the Labour Party and the trade unions, was profoundly anachronistic in Alfred Sherman's eyes. No longer should the Labour movement be regarded as group of morally upstanding men striving altruistically for self-betterment, inspired by the moral imperatives of millenarian Christianity. Now, he argued, trade union officials and Labour politicians were a bunch of 'multiquangocrats and fribbers', existing as a self-perpetuating oligarchy in their natural habitat of boards, tribunals and committees.[111] Their self-interest and parasitism was concealed by the romantic power of their teleological mythology of the forward march of labour.

Sherman hoped to accentuate the Conservative Party's role as a national party, which could incorporate those who had once belonged to a native British

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[108] Ibid., p.6.

[109] Ibid., p.7.

[110] Draft speech for Keith Joseph on incomes policy, 6 April 1976, TP, THCR 2/6/1/22.

[111] Alfred Sherman memo to Keith Joseph, 'C.P.R.S.', 6 March 1979, TP, THCR 2/6/1/194; Alfred Sherman, *The Newest Profession* (AIMS, September 1978), TP, THCR 2/6/1/9.

'Labourist' tradition who no longer had a home in the Marxist-infiltrated Labour Party. He argued that whereas men like Attlee and Morrison had spoken the same patriotic language as the British people, 'explicitly rejected the idea of class struggle', emphasized self-help and self-respect, and were hostile to state bureaucracies, the Labour Party had more recently, in spite of the heroic efforts of the late Hugh Gaitskell, come to be infected with the divisive language and ideas of Marxism.[112] Moreover, Sherman accused the Labour Party of lapsing into a 'prolecult' – a mélange of the Marxist concept of the proletariat as an agent for change and a 'Rousseauite' cult of the noble savage.[113] His idealized Labour men of the first half of the century apparently held no illusions about the true character of the poor, seeking to ameliorate their moral standards. In fact, Sherman's understanding of authentic British socialism seems to have been drawn partly from his reading of George Orwell, whose invectives against Marxists and unpatriotic intellectuals he enthusiastically endorsed.[114] Exposing the Labour movement's evolution 'from cloth cap to quango' was, in Sherman's mind, a prerequisite in establishing the Conservative Party as the truly national party.[115]

This concern with the history of the Labour movement was partly the product of cynical partisan calculation on the part of Sherman. In October 1977, he sent Thatcher a letter proposing a Tory 'bid' for social democracy.[116] By differentiating between socialism and social democracy, he hoped that adherents of the latter, disillusioned with the growing influence of the Bennite Left in the Labour Party, could be incorporated under the Conservative aegis. This initiative might explain the deification of the late Hugh Gaitskell and his 'gallant' attempts to repel Clause IV

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[112] Alfred Sherman, 'We hold Labour's Lost Ideals in Trust', TP, TCHR 2/6/1/225.
[113] Alfred Sherman, 'Capitalism, Socialism, Rationality', TP, TCHR 2/6/1/225.
[114] Alfred Sherman, 'Social Democracy's Crisis and our Evolving Tory Tradition: Labour's Defections are our Challenge', 19 December 1977, TP, TCHR 2/6/1/225.
[115] Sherman, *The Newest Profession*.
[116] Sherman letter to MT (initiatives).

that were incorporated into a number of Thatcher's speeches.[117] Sherman's conception of 'social democracy' was at best unorthodox, if not a blatant distortion. His vision of co-operative voluntarism had no place for egalitarianism or state intervention. Indeed, he rebuked Ian Gilmour for treating Anthony Crosland as a representative of social democracy, claiming that Crosland had sold out to Marxists.[118] What Sherman sought to revivify was the memory of the anti-state radicalism and Christian moralism of the early Labour movement in the hope that it would demonstrate how far the Labour Party had diverged from its past ideals. The Conservative Party could then adopt the mantle as the sole party that upheld Christian humanistic ideals, which had apparently once been universal across the British political spectrum. By contesting the Labour Party's narrative of its own history, which Joseph and Sherman believed was a key source of the party's strength, they hoped to recast the mythological schema of British politics.

Although, in June 1978, Thatcher called a halt to the 'social democratic heritage' theme, perhaps fearing that it only confused the message that the public shared *Conservative* values, the New Right did make a great effort to widen their tent to incorporate former Labour supporters. Sherman encouraged a number of disillusioned former Labour supporters to work with the CPS. The historian Hugh Thomas, whom Sherman recommended to Thatcher in June 1977, went on to serve as Chairman of the CPS for a decade after 1979.[119] In a collection of essays published in 1978, a series of these defectors outlined a similar perspective on the transformation of the Labour Party to that of Sherman.[120] For example, Paul Johnson,

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[117] Sherman, 'Social Democracy's Crisis and our Evolving Tory Tradition'; Margaret Thatcher, Speech to Hendon North Conservatives 15 August 1975, MTFW (102761); Margaret Thatcher, Speech to Conservative Party Conference, Blackpool, 14 October 1977, MTFW (103443); Margaret Thatcher, Speech to Conservative Party Conference, Brighton, 13 October 1978; Margaret Thatcher, Speech at Conservative Local Government Conference, London, 3 March 1979, MTFW (103961).
[118] Sherman letter to MT (initiatives).
[119] Alfred Sherman memo to Margaret Thatcher on Hugh Thomas, 2 June 1977, TP, THCR 2/6/1/22. This was a recommendation that Sherman would later regret (see Chapter Four).
[120] Patrick Cormack (ed.), *Right Turn: Eight Men Who Changed Their Minds* (London: Cooper, 1978).

a former editor of the *New Statesman* magazine, contrasted the corporatism and authoritarianism of the Labour Party of the 1970s with the movement's purportedly individualistic roots. Johnson claimed that socialism had once stood for the 'liberation of mankind' from the anonymity of industrial society. He went as far as to claim that the philosophy of Aneurin Bevan, the progenitor of the National Health Service and large-scale council housing, was marked by a 'gigantic individualism'.[121] While Johnson was perhaps correct to argue that Bevan believed in the opportunity for each individual to develop his or her own unique personality, it is doubtful whether, as a tribune of the Left, Bevan would have described himself as a gigantic individualist. Yet, for many of the contributors, the Labour Party after Gaitskell's death was a distinctly different body to the party they had joined. According to Edward Pearce, Labour had embraced the 'politics of the mob', becoming a vehicle for sectional interests rather than a national, democratic party.[122] Wilson and Callaghan's abandonment of the *'In Place of Strife'* industrial relations reforms betrayed the national and democratic spirit that had guided the party under Attlee and Gaitskell. Such contributions from renegades from the Left were highly prized by the New Right in their attempt to rework prevailing political narratives.

Having faced attempts to brand her and her party as a gaggle of right-wing Poujadistes representing the sectional interests of the middle class, Thatcher, under the guidance of the CPS, attempted to turn the tables. According to the New Right's mythology, the Conservative Party was the sole representative of the political mainstream, which incorporated the values and aspirations of the majority of ordinary, commonsense individuals and families. It was the Labour Party who represented the sectional minority interests of a union oligarchy and an intelligentsia remote from the ideas and sentiments of the majority. However, developing these ideas and themes was all well and good; but without an effective strategy for communicating them to the electorate, the New Right ran the risk of whistling in the

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[121] Paul Johnson, 'Farewell to the Labour Party', in Cormack (ed.), *Right Turn*, pp.75-87, at pp.76-8.
[122] Edward Pearce, 'A Shift to Malice', in Cormack (ed.), *Right Turn*, pp.61-73, at p.68.

wind, just as they had during the Heath years. Thankfully for them, Alfred Sherman had an extensive network of connections in politics, business and journalism that could help with this. During 1975, Sherman recruited three businessmen to work at the CPS - John Hoskyns, Terry Price and Norman Strauss – who would develop an innovative strategy for disseminating what they termed 'New Data'.

3.5 Transforming Mental Sets

The intellectual turn away from technocratic approaches to political leadership was paralleled in the sphere of business management. Antonio Weiss has highlighted how the entry of American management consultancy firms into the British market during the 1970s displaced the emphasis of domestic firms on 'planning' techniques with a higher-order focus on 'strategy' and employee 'know-how'.[123] These firms were influenced by new academic disciplines like cybernetics and operations research, which sought to optimize communication within organizations. Their priorities can be summarized by the acronym JOURNEY, which denoted 'jointly understanding, reflecting, and negotiating strategy'.[124] From this perspective, the key to a successful enterprise was less the application of specialized technical skills than the adoption of a shared understanding of and means of discussing a collective strategy. In the age of the microprocessor – the so-called 'Post-Industrial Revolution' - management theorists claimed to be moving away from deterministic 'cause-effect' models, towards considering problems in terms of holistic network effects.[125] This was termed 'systems thinking'.

Hence, although their ideas came from very different sources, figures from the business sphere were moving in a parallel intellectual direction to the emerging New Right. Much like the New Right thinkers examined in the preceding chapter,

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[123] Antonio E. Weiss, 'Management Consultancy and the UK State, 1964-1974', unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Cambridge (2011).

[124] Martin Reynolds and Sue Holwell (eds), *Systems Approaches to Managing Change: A Practical Guide* (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2010), pp.19-20.

[125] Russell L. Ackoff, *Redesigning the Future: A Systems Approach to Societal Problems* (New York: Wiley, 1974), p.8.

'systems' thinkers defined their approach as a remedy to 'reductionism' and 'determinism', investigating the behaviour and values of an enterprise or society as a whole.[126] Sir Geoffrey Vickers was one influential systems thinker who translated his perspective to a wider societal context.[127] Convinced that British society's values system was breaking down, he sought means of stabilizing the system by re-establishing the regulatory framework of what he termed 'appreciative behaviour'. In Vickers' theory, healthy societal development was contingent upon 'symbolic alchemy'.[128] In other words, social coherence, especially in periods of rapid economic and technological change, was sustained by a shared communicative framework and habitual behaviours. This meant that there were limits to which a social system could withstand innovation. However, in an argument that was particularly pertinent to the New Right's thinking, Vickers suggested that, potentially, governments could extend the limits of social innovation if they were to expose the public to 'education by common experience'. By ensuring that social experiences were 'commonly interpreted', political leaders could 'cause massive, spontaneous change in appreciation and behaviour, without weakening [social] coherence'.[129] Although Vickers warned that this approach risked polarizing conflict, it pointed the way towards the New Right's communications-led project, which aimed to reshape British political culture, overcoming the constraints that had blighted previous governments.

In fact, Geoffrey Vickers' ideas did find their way into the New Right's intellectual orbit through Terry Price and John Hoskyns. Price, a former nuclear

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[126] Ackoff, *Redesigning the Future,* pp.8-10; Styse Strijbes, 'Systems Thinking', in Robert Frodeman (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp.291-302.

[127] Nevil Johnson, 'Vickers, Sir (Charles) Geoffrey (1894-1982)', Oxford University Press, Sep 2004, [https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-31787?rskey=nncDMh&result=2, accessed 10 March 2020]. Vickers, the former director of economic intelligence in the Ministry for Economic Warfare, took an amateur interest in systems theory while working as a solicitor. He published extensively on social theory in retirement.

[128] Geoffrey Vickers, *Freedom in a Rocking Boat: Changing Values in an Unstable Society* (London: Allen Lane, 1970), p.105.

[129] Ibid., pp.142-3.

physicist, had been studying British industrial decline as part of the 1972 Group, a collection of businessmen and industrialists advising the Labour Party. In the process, Vickers' *Freedom in a Rocking Boat* (1970) made a particular impression on him.[130] Like Vickers, Price began to think of Britain's apparent social and economic decline in systemic terms. In doing so, Price had a meeting of minds with John Hoskyns, an IT entrepreneur who had become versed in the 'systems' approach while working at IBM.[131] Having met Hoskyns at an IBM dinner, Price encouraged him to join the 1972 Group.[132] The two men also dined with Vickers in order to share their similar outlooks.[133] In October 1974, Hoskyns and Price developed a labyrinthine 'wiring diagram' of Britain's 'doomed ecosystem', in which decline was a holistic, self-reinforcing process (Figure 1).[134] This characterization of British society as an organic, self-functioning entity caught the attention of Alfred Sherman, who had got to know Terry Price through their shared membership of the Romney Street Group, a London discussion group.[135] After lunching with Price and Hoskyns in September 1975, Sherman resolved to recommend to Keith Joseph that they become involved with the work of the CPS.

Although Hoskyns admitted to Joseph that he had never been a committed supporter of the Conservative Party, he expressed his philosophy that the Tory view of society as 'an organic socio-organic system rather than mechanical' corresponded most closely to the real world.[136] Until the mid-1970s at least, Hoskyns was convinced that the strategic constraints that prevailed in British politics could not be

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[130] Terence Price, *Political Physicist* (Lewes: The Book Guild Ltd, 2004), pp.345-6.

[131] John Hoskyns note for CPS ('Policy making for the next Conservative Government') [systems approach essential to real recovery], 14 October 1975, MTFW (111917). IBM had, until a 1956 United States antitrust court decision, been a major provider of consultancy services.

[132] John Hoskyns, *Just in Time: Inside the Thatcher Revolution* (London: Aurum Press, 2000), pp.10-11.

[133] Ibid., p.22; Price, *Political Physicist*, pp.345-6.

[134] Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, pp.11, 405. This was based on two remarkably similar diagrams that they had each produced independently.

[135] Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p.259.

[136] John Hoskyns letter to Alfred Sherman (plans for further meeting), 3 October 1975, MTFW (111915).

superseded without a new party.[137] However, he and Price eventually became committed to Sherman's project, gradually transferring their loyalties from the 1972 Group. Although Price played a more limited role, Hoskyns went on to become a central player at the Centre.[138] It was at the CPS that Hoskyns began to work with Norman Strauss, a marketing executive from Unilever and friend of Keith Joseph.[139] Strauss's waspish criticism of the 'behavioural rigidity' and 'status quo extremism' of civil service management techniques accorded well with Hoskyns and Sherman's desire to shake up Whitehall with a 'Reserve Army' of outside advisers.[140] Moreover, his expertise in public relations and 'the underlying psychological impact of words' would prove invaluable in their efforts to transform British political culture.[141] Indeed, in spite of their pseudo-scientific jargon, Hoskyns and Strauss encouraged the Conservative Party to turn its attention to British political culture, rather than just policy mechanisms, as the root of the country's apparent decline.

By employing the innovative management and public relations strategies of the private sector, they hoped to escape what Strauss called the 'BRIT-TRAP', a series of self-imposed restrictions on one's freedom of thought associated with middle-class values of tolerance and manners.[142] This reluctance to 'think the unthinkable' and break out of habits of action was, from Hoskyns and Strauss's perspective, blinding much of the Conservative Party to the severity of Britain's systemic decline and the necessity of a new, strategic approach to government if

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[137] John Hoskyns paper, 'The Need for a New Political Party', c. May 1975, The Papers of Terence Price, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge [hereafter TPP], PRCE 3/1; John Hoskyns note to Terence Price, 'Do We Really Need a New Party?', 4 June 1975, TPP, PRCE 3/1.

[138] Price, *Political Physicist*, p.354. Price later suggested that Joseph and Thatcher were suspicious that he harboured interventionist tendencies.

[139] Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, pp.20-1; Price, *Political Physicist*, p.343. Strauss's claim to fame was that he had launched a new soap, which had become a market leader in only three months.

[140] Note by Norman Strauss, 'Some background thinking on the NVG', 9 June 1977, HP, HOSK 1/13; Alfred Sherman memorandum to Margaret Thatcher, 20 November 1978, MTFW (112001).

[141] Sir Keith Joseph letter to Margaret Thatcher (your 23 Aug meeting with Hoskyns, Strauss & Price), 6 August 1976, MTFW (111936).

[142] Note by Norman Strauss, 'A simple way to look at slogans', 26 July 1976, and copies of other papers by Strauss, June-August 1976, HP, HOSK 1/6.

stabilization and recovery were to be accomplished. For Hoskyns, the vital lesson of the Heath government's failure was that a government 'can either confront (and fail) or compromise (and fail) inside the political constraints, or else remove them'.[143] The terms of political debate had to be altered if the Conservatives were not only to gain office, but also succeed in governing thereafter. Yet, fear of renewed 'confrontation' with the unions and reluctance to countenance deflationary economics was precluding effective action. Hoskyns and Strauss therefore committed themselves to convincing the Shadow Cabinet that a state of discontinuity existed in Britain, where 'solutions can only be found by breaking "unbreakable" political and economic constraints'.[144] Their 'Stepping Stones' project - established in July 1977 with the ostensible objective of establishing a communications programme to convince the public of the need to question the trade unions' current role in economic affairs - contained the 'hidden objectives' of convincing the Shadow Cabinet to commit themselves to strategic behaviour and instilling in them a 'sense of crusade' in their project of 'history-making'.[145] Strauss described this as a process of 'self-actualization', employing the terminology of the American psychologist Abraham Maslow.[146] Discussions of the minutiae of policy detail were entirely secondary in his eyes to the assurance that all members of the team possessed a shared analysis of the problem and a dedication to resolve it.

No doubt with the lessons of the Heath government in mind, Hoskyns wrote to Joseph:

We don't want the Tory Party sailing into office with a cast-iron 'plan', which turns out to be inappropriate [as in 1970]. Better to ensure a sort of intellectual limbering

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[143] Draft note (probably) by Hoskyns on 'The need for political innovation', 21 June 1977, HP, HOSK 1/16.

[144] Draft by Hoskyns of foreword for the Conservative Party General Election manifesto, 28 March 1979, HP, HOSK 1/241.

[145] Notes of a meeting between 'JH' [Hoskyns] and 'NS' [Norman Strauss] on 10 August 1977, copied to Strauss and 'TP' [Terry Price], 11 August 1977, HP, HOSK 1/30.

[146] Strauss, 'A simple way to look at slogans'. On Maslow, see Chapter Five.

up, a sensible way of thinking, a common language, an agreement about what is going to be central and what is peripheral, so that they don't quickly lose their bearings when the realities of office bear down on them.[147]

Previous governments, Hoskyns felt, had been 'too close to the subject, too short of thinking time'.[148] Without recourse to a detached, strategic approach, they were prisoners of conventional thinking, passively reacting to an adverse climate of public opinion, rather than leading it in the right direction. Indeed, the achievement of office was not sufficient in itself to ensure successful government; the Conservatives would have to create a 'public mood' that allowed them to govern successfully, taking unpleasant measures where necessary. At present, Hoskyns contended, the political market tended to reward those politicians who offered palliative painkillers, rather than essential surgery, mitigating the effects of decline rather than reversing it. A prodigious effort of political leadership was required to convince voters of the necessity of monetary control and a transformation of the role of the unions. Yet, previous governments, in presenting 'Shopping lists rather than strategic networks', had failed to transform the political climate.[149] Failing to recognize that moral and economic decline was a unitary, organic process, they had attempted in vain to treat particular issues as if they were self-contained problems capable of being remedied through rationally designed legislation. As the failure of grand legislative projects, such as the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, had apparently proven, legislation had to be founded upon an amenable popular sentiment. What most politicians had failed to recognize, according to Hoskyns, was the inextricable interdependence of policy and communications.

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[147] Copy of draft letter and note by Hoskyns for "KJ" on "Political innovation", 28 June 1977, HP, HOSK 1/17.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Note by Hoskyns 'Strategy, co-ordination, innovation', for our abortive meeting with MT [Margaret Thatcher MP] on 15 March 1979', 4 March 1979, HP, HOSK 1/229.

The Stepping Stones communication project was, Hoskyns told Joseph, 'relatively independent of policy detail'; it facilitated legislative change rather than prescribing it.[150] Its initial objective was to establish the reality of discontinuity in the minds of voters, such that they willingly altered their behaviour, accepting the necessity of a change in Britain's political economy. Rather than 'attempting to impose individual will or simplistic plans on the future', Conservative politicians would have to engage in a 'two-way dialogue with the people', establishing the sort of reciprocal feeling envisaged by figures like Enoch Powell in order to attain consent for change.[151] A prerequisite for establishing this connection, conveying a sense of discontinuity and breaking out of established political habits, was the dissemination of what Norman Strauss termed 'New Data'. By this, Strauss meant 'changed behaviour, style, manner, tone of voice, and, above all form and content', such that voters regarded the Conservative Party as a transformed institution from the 'transitory, ephemeral and appeasing' governments of the past.[152] He demanded an 'almost ascetic' degree of discipline on the part of Conservatives in their adoption of a new public language and tone that stressed the 'qualities of firmness and conviction' required to inspire confidence that the party knew the direction in which it wanted to take the country and possessed a shared resolution to get there.[153] Hoskyns envisaged that the communications strategy would unfold in three stages, which he delineated in a flow chart (Figure 2). The first stage, labelled 'Get Attention!', required communicators to instil 'mild shock' in the public by confronting them with the reality of Britain's decline and an impression of 'what disaster looks like'. Only when voters were convinced that Britain was at a turning point could the Conservatives then begin the second stage, educating them about the deleterious effect of socialism and dismantling the mythology of the Labour

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[150] Second draft of note by 'JH' [John Hoskyns] to 'KJ' [Sir Keith Joseph MP] summarizing the 'assignment you would like me to undertake', 14 July 1977, HP, HOSK 1/21.

[151] Strauss, 'Some background thinking on the NVG'.

[152] Strauss, 'A simple way to look at slogans'; Joseph, 'Our Tone of Voice and Our Tasks'.

[153] Strauss, 'Some background thinking on the NVG'.

movement. In the final stage, during the election campaign, Hoskyns envisioned Thatcher advancing her populist theme that Tory values were shared by the majority of the population, appealing to the 'common ground' that had been established in earlier stages of the communications programme. If executed successfully, Hoskyns believed that voters would be instilled with a conviction that change was necessary and be motivated to vote for it, rather than falling back on the compromises served up by Callaghan.

In all of this, Hoskyns and Strauss were governed by a belief that 'the dissemination of ideas, and the changing of attitudes is not a strictly rational, or even conscious, process'.[154] They believed that political responses were to a large degree habitual, governed by the voter's 'Mental Set', a relatively fixed complex of opinions, values and predispositions.[155] Only by conveying discontinuity and producing New Data, in the form of new ideas, language and tone of voice, could the Conservatives hope to break these instinctual responses. Hence, the Stepping Stones programme aimed to generate 'cognitive dissonance', disrupting the Mental Sets of Labour supporters by disturbing the consistency of their beliefs. Hoskyns and Strauss hoped to confront these voters with an impression of the 'Sick Society', which conflicted with their established preconceptions. They hoped that images of Shirley Williams on the picket line during the Grunwick dispute, as well as of the hospital strike disrupting the treatment of patients, would challenge the deeply ingrained mythology of the trade union movement as an altruistic movement dedicated to the struggle for justice for the working man.[156] Instead, the present role of the unions, which he perceived to be the organization of conflict between vested interest groups and imposition of suffering on the general public, would be exposed. However, these 'nuggets', relayed by the media and 'trickling through the collective unconscious', needed to be crystallized in the public mind and linked explicitly to socialist

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[154] 'Stepping Stones' Report, November 1977, TP, THCR 2/6/1/248, p.21.
[155] Ibid., p.24.
[156] Note (probably) by Hoskyns on 'The sick society', ca. April 1978, HP, HOSK 1/115.

policies.[157] The Stepping Stones jargon for this process was 'thematic bridging', whereby all arguments were integrated into a single macro-theme of 'The Sick Society and the Healthy Society'.[158] Hoskyns hoped to draw attention to the moral aspects of Britain's economic decline, an approach he felt was much more powerful than appeals to material self-interest. For example, by juxtaposing the impact of inflation on pensioners' savings with the indexed pensions of civil servants and public sector workers, they could arouse moral indignation. In fact, he explicitly advocated that Conservatives employ the 'language of crime' to reinforce the emphasis on morality in their economic message. Spokesmen and writers should refer to the 'innocent victims' of union abuses and socialist policies 'robbing people' of the fruits of their labour.[159] Hoskyns hoped that such emotive appeals and the provision of New Data could generate the 'stress' necessary to gradually alter Mental Sets, undermining the socialist mythology that had become so deeply ingrained.

What Hoskyns and Strauss termed 'POLICIES FOR PEOPLE' could not be introduced in a vacuum without a corresponding acculturation of their Mental Sets, which would at present result in their *prima facie* rejection given that they came from Tories and were subject to the 'hysterical censure' of the cultural establishment.[160] Rank-and-file trade unionists, for example, remained extremely loyal to the union leadership due to a mixture fear of a metaphorical 'banishment to Siberia' and emotional loyalty to 'his tribe, his clan'.[161] Hoskyns and Strauss recommended the establishment of a working party dedicated to an almost ethnographic investigation of the Mental Set of the trade unionist.[162] In order to overcome the prejudices of a previous era of class-based politics, Conservative spokesmen and women should be

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[157] Ibid.

[158] 'Stepping Stones' Report, p.25; Minutes by 'K.J.' [Sir Keith Joseph MP] of the Stepping Stones Steering Group meeting on 12 January 1978, 12 January 1978, HP, HOSK 1/59.

[159] Draft note by Hoskyns for 'KJ' [Sir Keith Joseph MP] on 'Electoral themes', 18 February 1979, HP, HOSK 1/224.

[160] Note by Norman Strauss, 'Why the NVG must be circumspect in answering the question "What will it do?"', 19 January 1977, HP, HOSK 1/10.

[161] 'Stepping Stones' Report, p.36.

[162] Ibid., p.38.

'younger and more class free people'.[163] Moreover, the party should consider launching a few 'symbolic' policies to disturb voters' assumptions regarding its approach. Suggestions of symbolic policies included electoral reform and the invitation of Labour MPs to join the NEDC. They even contemplated deliberately publicizing 'half-baked' policies in order to draw the Labour government into debate and away from their comfort zone of relying upon the existing underlying assumptions of British political life.[164] By employing this co-ordinated approach to public communications, Hoskyns and Strauss believed that the Conservatives could catalyse a deep-seated evolution of voters' entire outlook on life and transform not only their transitory opinions on particular issues, but also their more profound political predispositions.

Whilst emotional appeals might be most effective in cultivating the support of certain sections of the electorate, they were not assumed to be universally appropriate. It is certainly true that Hoskyns and Strauss believed that the political responses of the majority of the electorate were indeed determined by emotional or intuitive impulses. They labelled this majority group 'the Feelers' and sought to inflame their sense of 'shame and disgust' at the abuses of union power and iniquities of socialist policy.[165] However, some voters were better described as 'Doers'. Given that they considered political issues in more practical terms, Doers were only likely to be convinced by policy proposals that had already been demonstrated to be effective in real life. This put the opposition party at a natural disadvantage as their proposals could only be hypothetical. It would be essential therefore for the Conservatives to introduce New Data, in order to shift the terms of political debate away from discussions of present policy, an area in which the government possessed the in-built advantage of incumbency.[166] Simple and emotional appeals were appropriate for the ignorant majority in a society in which, as

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[163] Ibid., p.A2.
[164] Ibid., p.42.
[165] Ibid., p.23.
[166] Ibid., pp.23-4.

Hoskyns pointed out, fewer than one-in-six had been educated beyond O Level.[167] Nevertheless, Hoskyns and Strauss did posit that a small 'rational minority' of 'Thinkers' existed.[168] Only this group was deemed to possess the capacity to rationally weigh up alternative policies. Nevertheless, in spite of their modest number, they did not consider making rational appeals to Thinkers to be a futile enterprise. Given their roles in education and media, they were to deemed to play a disproportionate role in altering the attitudes of wider society. Not only could they disseminate New Data, but they could also assist in the formulation of thematic bridges. By weaving together elements of New Data into an overarching theme and language, the media could help to encourage Feelers and Doers to behave like Thinkers, inculcating complex arguments into the underlying assumptions of British political culture.

In the appendix of the Stepping Stones report, the authors included a Venn diagram (Figure 3) to illustrate the 'Process of Diffusion of Information', whereby the communication of New Data to Thinkers, via the media, would be the initial step in transforming the nationwide climate of opinion. Strauss advocated a professional media relations operation, including a 'military-style' Central Office and News Room, where positive comments from the media could be synthesized.[169] Likewise, Hoskyns encouraged the party to ensure that they succeeded in 'locking in' media commentators to their intellectual position.[170] He took the lead in this by inviting Colin Welch of *The Daily Telegraph* as a witness to the discussions of the Stepping Stones Steering Group as well as holding informal discussions with Larry Lamb and Samuel Brittan of *The Sun* and *Financial Times* respectively.[171] Moreover, Geoffrey

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[167] John Hoskyns paper on 'Party Strategy, Policy and Organisation', July 1975. HP, HOSK 1/33.

[168] 'Stepping Stones' Report, pp.18, 23.

[169] Draft briefing note by 'NS' [Norman Strauss] on 'Strategy and communications', 7 April 1978, HP, HOSK 1/104.

[170] Detailed notes by Hoskyns for 'NS' [Norman Strauss] and 'TP' [Terry Price] relating to his progress meeting with Sir Keith Joseph MP on 26 August 1977, 1 September 1977, HP, HOSK 1/34.

[171] Minutes by 'K.J.' [Sir Keith Joseph MP] of the Stepping Stones Steering Group meeting on 12 January 1978, 12 January 1978, HP, HOSK 1/59.

Howe relayed Stepping Stones reports to the editor of *The Times*, William Rees-Mogg, so that he could 'orientate' himself to the communications strategy.[172] Having, with the assistance of these amenable figures in the media sector, diffused New Data, Hoskyns and Strauss hoped that the public's diffuse sense of discontent and anxiety would coalesce with their political critique of the socio-economic status quo. Rather than waiting for an inevitable turn of the tide against the Labour government, they believed that the New Right must take the initiative in strategically leading public opinion. Hoskyns encapsulated this philosophy a note to Keith Joseph in which he quoted a purportedly German aphorism that 'The public is that part of the population which does not know what it wants'. While broadly agreeing with this depiction of a witless multitude, Hoskyns qualified the maxim, arguing that the public 'does know once it has been articulated, boldly'.[173] If their strategy went according to plan, the Conservatives would present a bold and coherent message, catalysing mass support for their agenda.

3.6 Rowing Through Treacle

In order to articulate their strategy boldly, Hoskyns and Strauss needed the support, or at least acquiescence, of members of the Shadow Cabinet and the CRD who were responsible for executing the Conservatives' public relations campaign. Alfred Sherman and the CPS were, of course, very much on board with the Stepping Stones approach. In discussions with Strauss in 1977, Sherman agreed that the party needed to adopt a 'persuasion model', similar to those employed by the consumer goods industry. He also dedicated himself to assisting in encouraging members of the Shadow Cabinet to commit to strategic behaviour, hoping that by instilling fear that Labour could achieve victory on the basis of fiscally-prudent 'good housekeeping'

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[172] Handwritten notes by Hoskyns relating to the meeting of Stepping Stones Steering Group on 6 November 1978, HP, HOSK 1/189; Copy of letter by Hoskyns to 'Geoffrey' [Sir Geoffrey Howe MP], 2 March 1979, enclosing a copy of paper by Hoskyns, 'Getting from here to there, the task of stabilisation and turn-around', 2 March 1979, HP, HOSK 1/228.
[173] Draft note by Hoskyns for Joseph on 'Electoral themes'.

policies, he could stiffen their resolve and 'sense of crusade' behind the strategy.[174]
Angus Maude - albeit after initially being wary - likewise came to embrace the
Stepping Stones project.[175] Hoskyns noted that Maude found the report 'V.Exciting'
and 'Agree[d] analysis and conclusions 100%', relating its ideas to his book *The
Common Problem*. Believing that most politicians underestimated the extent of
public antipathy towards the trade unions, Maude suggested that the 'internal
conversion' of the party might be their most difficult challenge. 'Doves' like Willie
Whitelaw, Maude suggested, were conditioned by the culture in the Department of
Employment to be 'terrified of the Unions'.[176] It seemed that their inclination was to
avoid kindling divisive issues, regardless of whether they agreed with the analysis.

However, a close reading of the discussions amongst Conservatives around
the Stepping Stones strategy reveals that to bifurcate the party into 'wets' and 'dries',
or 'doves' and 'hawks', during this period, would be to misrepresent what were more
nuanced debates. A week after Maude had warned Hoskyns of the difficulty of
converting the 'doves' in the Shadow Cabinet, the pair met with Whitelaw, who
surprised them with his receptiveness to the ideas in the report. The Deputy Leader
of the Opposition described the paper as 'fascinating' and accepted its basic
premises, querying only its floating of the referendum as a means of resolving
industrial relations impasses. Most significantly, Whitelaw echoed Hoskyns' analysis
that, although the Conservatives may well be able to win an election without tackling
the union issue head on, this would inevitably be followed by failure in
government.[177] His cautiousness was not synonymous with an aversion to innovative

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[174] Notes of a meeting between Hoskyns and Strauss on 10 August 1977.

[175] Detailed notes by Hoskyns for 'NS' [Norman Strauss] and 'TP' [Terry Price] relating to his meeting
with Angus Maude MP on 16 August 1977, 18 August 1977, HP, HOSK 1/31. In their initial meeting,
Hoskyns found that Maude 'warmed up a lot', agreeing with his 'vicious cycle' model of decline.
Maude was, however, inclined to side with Jim Prior regarding the undesirability of reforming the
closed shop too hastily.

[176] Notes by Hoskyns relating to his meeting with [Sir Angus] 'Maude' [MP], 22 November 1977, HP,
HOSK 1/44.

[177] Handwritten notes by Hoskyns of his meeting with [William] 'Whitelaw' [MP] and 'Angus' [Maude
MP], 29 November 1977, HP, HOSK 1/46.

thinking. Indeed, some of the latter-day 'Thatcherites' were more reluctant than Whitelaw to embrace Stepping Stones. Upon the formation of a Stepping Stones Steering Group in August 1977, Hoskyns described Geoffrey Howe as the 'most obviously impatient and hostile' member of the group, repeatedly contradicting his statements.[178] Similarly, Nigel Lawson was critical of Hoskyns' approach, claiming that spending years 'Defining the Central Problem' would preclude effective economic analysis and policy formation.[179] In his memoirs, Hoskyns mocked Lawson's 'enthusiasms' for policies ranging from German-style works councils to universal access to vegetable allotments.[180] Rather than exposing a hard and fast ideological dichotomy within the party, Stepping Stones became entangled in a complicated web of institutional rivalries and tactical debates that defy easy categorization.

One clear centre of resistance to the Stepping Stones strategy, however, was the CRD and in particular the department's director, Chris Patten. Having been appointed Director of the CRD by Michael Wolff, a figure closely connected with Edward Heath who was promptly removed from his position upon Thatcher's accession to the leadership, Patten felt that he was automatically considered suspect to those who viewed past policymaking 'through the prism of dogmatic certainty…infused with conspiracy theory'.[181] From his perspective, the existence of the CPS and Stepping Stones were means through which Thatcher satisfied her more zealous supporters, rather than serious influences on policymaking and electoral strategy. Yet, his later claim that the CRD was never seriously bothered about the activities of Hoskyns and Strauss is belied by the effort the department made to gain control over Stepping Stones. Patten advised the Steering Committee to regard the

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[178] Detailed notes by Hoskyns for 'NS' [Norman Strauss] and 'TP' [Terry Price] relating to his meeting with Sir Geoffrey Howe MP on 26 August 1977, 31 August 1977, HP, HOSK 1/33.

[179] Copy of letter by Nigel Lawson to Sir Keith Joseph MP relating to the Policy Search Group meeting of 20 March 1978, 27 March 1978, HP, HOSK 1/98.

[180] Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p.65.

[181] Chris Patten, 'The Thatcher Years', in Alistair Cooke (ed.), *Tory Policy-Making: The Conservative Research Department, 1929-2009* (Eastbourne: Manor Creative, 2009), pp.79-93, at p.84.

report as a more narrow 'up-market campaign directed towards heavy-weight speeches, articles and the follow-up to them'.[182] Under the orders of Keith Joseph, Hoskyns was compelled to share all of his papers with Patten and attempt to 'merge' the Stepping Stones strategy with that of the CRD.[183] The Party Chairman, Lord Thorneycroft, likewise insisted that it was 'better to have one strategy than two'.[184] Hoskyns was left infuriated that, as he saw it, Patten was attempting to 'bypass the essence of Stepping Stones', with no 're-calibration of the centre ground', no recognition of the need for 'changing attitudes and behaviour for the long haul' and, by implication, 'reliance on conventional wisdom'.[185] Joseph, Hoskyns wrote in his diary, was 'hopeless…completely defeatist, fatalistic, passive in the face of opposition to S-S'.[186] Attempting to get the Conservative Party to adhere to his strategy felt, he wrote, 'like rowing a barge of concrete through treacle'.[187]

In many respects, Hoskyns was correct to say that critics of Stepping Stones were reliant on conventional wisdom. In fact, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, John Davies, proudly described his outlook as 'old-fashioned' when he met Hoskyns upon Thorneycroft's request. He warned Hoskyns that, however credible his critique of trade union behaviour might be, openly attacking them would be counter-productive, encouraging them to close ranks.[188] It no doubt seemed that veterans of earlier Conservative governments like Davies and Thorneycroft retained a pessimistic supposition that the natural identification of working-class voters was with the

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[182] Steering Committee: Paper circulated (Patten on "Stepping Stones" & strategy), 23 February 1978, MTFW (109854).

[183] Short handwritten note by Hoskyns of his telephone conversation with 'KJ' [Sir Keith Joseph MP], 30 January 1978, HP, HOSK 1/73.

[184] Handwritten notes by Hoskyns relating to his meeting with [Lord (Peter)] 'Thorneycroft' (Chairman, Conservative Party), 25 January 1978, HP, HOSK 1/65.

[185] Copy of letter by Hoskyns to Sir Keith Joseph MP relating to a note by Christopher Patten (Director, Conservative Research Department), 'Further thoughts on strategy', 27 February 1978, HP, HOSK 1/80.

[186] Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p.54.

[187] Ibid., p.61.

[188] Handwritten notes by Hoskyns relating to his meeting with John Davies MP, 7 February 1978, HP, HOSK 1/73.

Labour movement and they had little faith in the capacity of politicians to alter that by means of public debate. Thorneycroft was sceptical that a 'prolonged intellectual campaign' could succeed in altering the predispositions of voters.[189] To be seen to be 'arguing with the public' would, in his mind, prove counter-productive.[190] Invoking polling evidence, Thorneycroft suggested that the public was broadly supportive of the Labour government's five per cent pay policy, associating it with firm, decisive government. The Conservative alternative seemed to be regarded as a 'free-for-all', which would be ineffective and even dangerous. Rather than openly challenging this interpretation, Thorneycroft advised that the Conservatives 'accept at least some part at least of the public illusion' and seek to nudge the nation towards a 'commonsense position'.[191] This was an argument seconded by Patten, who argued that, given the difficulty of changing minds in the short amount of time before the general election, the party's 'simple message has to meet the Labour Party's election argument', countering their claims with statistical evidence.[192] For Patten and Thorneycroft, political realism dictated that the party must play the electoral hand they were dealt, rather than trying to rewrite the rules of the game. They retained an outlook that regarded perceptions of the incumbent government's success in managing the economy, rather than success in public debate, as the primary determinant of electoral success.

Hoskyns, in a lengthy note he sent to Patten, raised doubts about the wisdom of basing an electoral appeal on a comparison of the two parties' records in government. Patten's 'battle of the Themes', Hoskyns argued, would degenerate into a 'tit-for-tat back into the dim past' and would encourage Thinkers to resurrect the memory of the 1970-74 government. Feelers would be likewise unimpressed, seeing

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[189] Briefing paper by Lord (Peter) Thorneycroft on 'Pay policy', 21 November 1978, HP, HOSK 1/195.
[190] Note by Lord (Peter) Thorneycroft (Chairman, Conservative Party) to Margaret Thatcher MP, 13 December 1978, HP, HOSK 1/204.
[191] Briefing paper by Thorneycroft on 'Pay policy'.
[192] Steering Committee: Paper circulated (Patten on strategy), 21 December 1977, MTFW (109847).

only 'two untrusted merchandisers each affirming that their brand washes whiter'.[193] Rather than being motivated simply by the promise of material gain, Feelers needed to be emotionally invested in the promise of a better, more moral society. Indeed, Hoskyns developed his commentary on Patten's strategy memoranda into a reassertion of his wider intellectual critique of the CRD's approach. Their fundamental misconception, in his mind, was to treat the economy as if it were an object, subject to rational modification, rather than 'a process with a life of its own'. Demands for a detailed legislative agenda resulted from this 'unawareness of positive feedback', whereby changes in the attitudes and behaviour of society might render legislative change unnecessary. To nurture changes in attitudes required a co-ordinated communications programme. Rather than employing a scattergun approach, propagating a muddle of individual messages, Hoskyns argued that the Conservatives, by employing the Stepping Stones strategy, could build their matchsticks into a model of St Paul's.[194]

Although it might have seemed that there was a fundamental ideological divide between Hoskyns' strategy and the conciliatory, corporatist approach of Thorneycroft and Patten, their differences derived largely from their contrasting conceptions of public opinion. In his note to Patten, Hoskyns acknowledged that their starting assumptions regarding Britain's economic problems were largely the same. Their differences turned on how far they believed that the public's deeply entrenched attitudes could be altered by skilled communications techniques.[195] In the current climate of public opinion, Thorneycroft regarded corporatism as an inevitability. Given that attempts at legislation to restrict union powers had foundered in 1969 and 1971, he argued that whatever the theoretical view, 'we will be talking to the trade unions and the CBI'.[196] Thorneycroft and the Shadow

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[193] Note by Hoskyns on 'Merging the strategies', 10 February 1978 (sent to Christopher Patten, Director, Conservative Research Department, 12 February 1978), HP, HOSK 1/77.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Briefing paper by Thorneycroft on 'Pay policy'.

Employment Secretary, Jim Prior, regarded 'confrontation' with unions as a recipe for electoral disaster and the alternative of the 'free for all' of collective bargaining as a recipe for class conflict and anarchy.[197] Conciliation through bodies like the NEDC was the only way, in their eyes, to reconcile the inevitable conflict. In response to this critique, Hoskyns maintained that Stepping Stones proposed no repeat of 1971, prescribing no specific legislative changes. Its aim, rather, was to foster the changes in attitudes amongst trade unionists and the wider public that would make legislative change easier or indeed unnecessary. As Adrian Williamson has highlighted, after 1974 the Conservatives moved away from the 'hawkish', legalistic approach to industrial relations that had been long advocated by the Tory Right towards a more voluntaristic approach, attempting to encourage trade unionists to alter their behaviour.[198] Hoskyns was at pains to stress that this did *not* amount to a return to 'traditional' free collective bargaining. The aim of Stepping Stones was to resolve the apparent choice between an incomes policy 'which distorts and thus destroys the economy slowly' and 'UK-style collective bargaining which can wreck it quickly'.[199] The terms of the debate had to be altered such that voluntarism did not beget anarchy and legislation was founded upon a pre-existing consensus.

Hoskyns did not consider his position on industrial relations to be that of a hawk. Indeed, he was critical of the 'simple-minded union bashing' of right-wing Tories.[200] Such 'emotional self-indulgence', he argued, 'would certainly unite the unions and alienate floating voters'.[201] Hence, he rejected calls to immediately enact a 1971-style measure circumscribing trade union power within a legal framework. Like Prior, he recognized that the Industrial Relations Act had succeeded only in

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[197] Handwritten notes [possibly by Norman Strauss] on Stepping Stones Steering Group meeting on 13 November 1978, HP, HOSK 1/191. At this meeting Prior stressed that the Conservatives could not go back to 'legislation and warfare' again. Thorneycroft suggested that the party was seen to stand for a 'Free for all controlled by ill-defined monetary techniques of savage ruthlessness'.
[198] Williamson, *Conservative Economic Policymaking*, p.162.
[199] Stepping Stones review by Hoskyns, 8 November 1978, HP, HOSK 1/190.
[200] Draft note by Hoskyns for 'KJ' on 'Electoral themes'.
[201] Copy of letter by Hoskyns to 'Keith' [Sir Keith Joseph MP] relating to Hoskyns' meeting with Howe and Prior and 'Stepping Stones', 11 December 1977, HP, HOSK 1/50.

uniting the trade union movement against the government and provided a huge propaganda boon to the Left. Hoskyns advised that Conservative spokesmen, if questioned about whether they would support the re-enactment of the Act, should express their sympathy for the principles behind the measure but deny that they would repeat it. Laws, they should contend, ought to be enacted only following full and public debate, such that they were grounded in public sentiment.[202]

In fact, Conservatives who adopted an ostensibly conciliatory stance to the unions were not necessarily deviating from the Stepping Stones strategy. Hoskyns wrote a speech for Whitelaw in 1978, in which he insisted criticism of the unions did not amount to hostility, whilst arguing that union leaders were not effectively representing their members.[203] Although he sardonically characterized Jim Prior as a 'nice, reasonable and sensible man, hoping to meet stupidity and ruthlessness with concessions and pragmatism', Hoskyns recognized that public conciliation was a prerequisite to changing public attitudes and making union reform feasible.[204] Upon meeting Prior initially, Hoskyns noted that the Shadow Employment Secretary 'agreed emphatically' with his model of the interconnected nature of Britain's problems.[205] Their differences amounted not to their diagnosis of Britain's problems, but in the tactics and pace at which they envisaged tackling them. Hoskyns accepted that Prior's fears that strident Conservative rhetoric would reunite rather than expose the divisions of the trade union movement were 'sensible-sounding', despite fearing that he was overly complacent in believing that things would continue to move 'our way' without significant intervention.[206] The Stepping Stones report went on to incorporate Prior's 'bridge-building' as the first step of an incremental approach to

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[202] Note by Hoskyns on 'Demolishing trade union mythology, some material for speeches or discussions', 23 July 1978, HP, HOSK 1/163.

[203] Suggested statement for 'W.W.' [William Whitelaw MP] on, 'A healthy partnership between the Union movement and the next Tory government must be based on plain and honest speaking', ? July 1978, HP, HOSK 1/160.

[204] Detailed notes by Hoskyns for 'NS' [Norman Strauss] and 'TP' [Terry Price] relating to his meeting with Jim Prior MP on 27 July 1977, 1 August 1977, HP, HOSK 1/26.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Hoskyns, *Just In Time*, pp.48-9.

changing public attitudes, ensuring that it was more difficult for Labour to 'dismiss it as an archetypal Tory war dance'.[207]

However, incrementalism was a difficult concept for politicians preoccupied with more immediate electoral considerations to embrace. From Hoskyns' perspective, Thorneycroft's 'completely meaningless critique' derived from a fundamental misunderstanding of the Stepping Stones strategy.[208] The Party Chairman considered the report to be an incendiary provocation of union militancy. Reviewing a section of the report, he wrote to Hoskyns that 'Frankly the imagination boggles at the idea of any senior Tory appearing on the box…uttering that sentence'.[209] Hoskyns' retort was that he never intended this strategic analysis to be communicated to the electorate. On the contrary, electoral messages, especially those to Feelers, had to be contrived in an extremely careful and self-conscious manner. Thorneycroft, Hoskyns wrote in his diary, 'seemed to think that we wanted shadow ministers to shout "Smash the unions!" from the rooftops'.[210] Along with Thorneycroft and Patten, it seemed to Hoskyns that men like Ian Gilmour and Timothy Raison were waging 'a war of total inertia' in their roles on the 'Sick and healthy society' team.[211] For them, frustrating the ambitions of zealots like Hoskyns would prevent electoral disaster.

Yet, Hoskyns' frustrations were not reserved only for those thought to be on the left of the party. While he accused Thorneycroft and Patten of failing to

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[207] Stepping Stones Report (final text). The report went as far as to argue that 'without Mr Prior's "bridge-building" over the past three years, this "great debate" would be politically impossible'.

[208] Hoskyns, *Just In Time*, p.52.

[209] Copy of note to Hoskyns by [Lord (Peter)] 'Thorneycroft, heavily annotated by Hoskyns, undated, February 1978, HP, HOSK 1/75.

[210] Hoskyns, *Just In Time*, p.52.

[211] Ibid., pp.59-61. The Stepping Stones programme was intended to implemented by three 'teams'. The 'Socialism and the trade union movement' team was chaired by Jim Prior and included Barney Hayhoe, Reginald Prentice, Stephen Abbott and Professor Andrew Sykes, an industrial relations expert from the University of Strathclyde. The 'Sick and healthy society' group was chaired by Ian Gilmour and included Timothy Raison, John Biffen and the journalist Ronald Butt. Finally, the 'Policy search' team was led by Keith Joseph and included David Howell, Norman Lamont and Nigel Lawson.

understand the report's incrementalism, he also criticized Angus Maude for failing to understand the need for symbolic policy to change the negative Tory stereotype prior to any reform of trade union law.[212] Maude's contribution disappointed Hoskyns, who put his ineffectuality down to the fact he was operating essentially on a 'moonlighting' basis alongside his role as Chairman of the CRD.[213] Thatcher and her close associates were also guilty, in Hoskyns mind, of failing to adopt a strategic outlook, impatiently demanding policy proposals prior to full definition of the problems. To employ the jargon of Stepping Stones, any attempt to implement 'turn around' policies, prior to a lengthy period of 'good housekeeping', was like 'a Forestry Commission work party arriving at a forest fire to put up the "'No Smoking'" signs'.[214] Along with Strauss, Hoskyns prepared a note for an abortive meeting with Thatcher in March 1979, in which he was highly critical of her leadership style. The leader, he wrote, should diffuse the new strategic 'culture' through government by example. Once in office, they could no longer afford to indulge in 'prima donna behaviour'.[215] In his diary, Hoskyns described Thatcher as 'petulant' and a 'v.bad chairman', guilty of 'announcing her favourite solution right at the outset and holding forth far too much' and displaying a 'bad habit of blaming others in front of people'.[216] In meetings of the Stepping Stones Steering Committee, Thatcher revealed her activist inclinations and resultant impatience with the strategy. She berated the group for having 'got nowhere with publicity' and exclaimed that 'We mustn't do nothing' with regard to industrial relations legislation, otherwise they 'Might as well emigrate'.[217] In a somewhat condescending diary entry, Hoskyns

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[212] Handwritten notes [possibly by Norman Strauss] on Stepping Stones Steering Group meeting on 13 November 1978.

[213] Copy of a letter by Hoskyns to 'Keith' [Sir Keith Joseph MP] relating to party political broadcasts, 17 April 1978, HP, HOSK 1/113.

[214] Hoskyns, 'Getting from here to there'.

[215] Note by Hoskyns 'Strategy, co-ordination, innovation', for our abortive meeting with MT.

[216] Hoskyns, *Just In Time*, pp.73-4. Hoskyns' analysis was that this bullying behaviour was a sign of Thatcher's lack of confidence. He believed she tried to put Sir Geoffrey Howe down because she knew he was more intelligent than her and as a result felt insecure.

[217] Handwritten notes [possibly by Norman Strauss] on Stepping Stones Steering Group meeting on 13 November 1978.

accused Thatcher of conceptual naïveté, writing that 'she cannot see how two apparently modest law changes can interact together to change the balance of power'.[218] As time went by, Hoskyns increasingly came to regard himself as an enlightened prophet amongst a parade of blinkered buffoons, undertaking the Sisyphean task of converting the Tory Party to a professionalized and strategic approach to politics.

Hoskyns' periodic reviews of the Stepping Stones project's progress reveal his exasperation at the Conservatives' failure to implement his recommended strategy. By the end of 1978, he did detect some signs of progress. He noted that Geoffrey Howe's speeches on industrial relations were no longer being shouted down as 'confrontation' and prominent journalists like Hugo Young and Peter Jenkins were beginning to recognize the centrality of the union question to British politics.[219] Nevertheless, contrary to the original Stepping Stones model of the diffusion of New Data, Feelers seemed to progress more quickly in their recognition of union abuses than Thinkers. By February 1979, Hoskyns had come to believe that once a sufficient number of ordinary people had come to understand sound basic economic principles, it would not matter that a substantial number of academics, bishops and other opinion formers were still mistaken in their outlook.[220] His theoretical reading was that, in spite of the foundering of the 'Process of Diffusion of Innovation', the events of the 'Winter of Discontent' had rescued the Conservatives from failure, generating the 'moral disgust' with the unions required to establish cognitive dissonance amongst Feelers. He was hopeful that the swing in the opinion polls back towards the Conservatives would prove lasting, given that 'a change in public opinion has been crystallized by moral indignation, rather than usual concern about prices & living standards etc'.[221] Had it not been for the serendipity of the

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[218] Hoskyns, *Just In Time*, pp.85-6.
[219] Stepping Stones review by Hoskyns.
[220] Draft note by Hoskyns for 'KJ' on 'Electoral themes'. Hoskyns argued that these economic principles were ones which 'every street corner tobacconist understands.
[221] Ibid.

Winter of Discontent, Hoskyns would probably have been even more incensed at the failure to fully implement his strategy. During the winter, he drew a flow chart titled 'Have we the will?' in which he explored an array of purported failures in the implementation of the strategy. From Hoskyns' perspective as an outsider to parliamentary life, the Conservatives' gentlemanly culture of dilettantism left them guilty of chronic 'underkill'. Recoiling from internal confrontation, they swept disagreements under the carpet and failed to properly define the problems they faced in the early years of the parliament. He wished that they had been more prepared to clear a space in their diaries for long-term strategic thinking; yet, having no experience of modern management techniques, they dismissed ideas like weekend retreats and the use of flip charts as 'not in our culture'.[222] Having failed to dedicate sufficient time to problem definition, strategic co-ordination and clarity of communication proved difficult to achieve.

Thatcher was subject to numerous voices pushing her in different directions with regard to her public relations strategy. During the Winter of Discontent, Thatcher acceded to the advice of Patten, Thorneycroft and Ronnie Millar to take a conciliatory line in the Conservatives' televised party political broadcast (PPB), promising to support Callaghan in introducing reforms to industrial relations law.[223] As Charles Moore describes, Thatcher took a great deal of convincing to adopt this approach. Nevertheless, to suggest that the broadcast 'involved departing by more than an iota from her convictions' is certainly overdrawn.[224] Its emollient tone did not preclude adherence to elements of the Stepping Stones strategy. In fact, Hoskyns recalled that it 'struck exactly the right note of national rather than party concern'.[225] By recalling 'things I've seen on television, read in the newspapers, and heard directly from you in factories and shopping centres', Thatcher sought to establish

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[222] Diagram by Hoskyns, 'Have we the will?', 15 December 1978.

[223] Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography. Volume One: Not for Turning:* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), p.397. See also, Tim Bell, *Right or Wrong: The Memoirs of Lord Bell* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp.57-8.

[224] Moore, *Thatcher: Volume One*, p.397.

[225] Hoskyns, *Just In Time*, p.85.

'thematic bridges' to crystallize public discontent into a politicized narrative.[226] Moreover, its appeal to bipartisanship was founded not upon an effort to meet the Labour Party halfway, but on an attempt to establish a new political consensus around what Keith Joseph would have termed the 'common ground'. Thatcher called for an attempt to reach agreement *inside* parliament on issues upon which she affirmed there was already a consensus *outside* of parliament.[227] Thus, in spite of its ostensible similarities, this broadcast was no Heathite exhortation to national unity around the conciliation of interest groups. It managed to combine a tone of suprapartisan moderation with a populist appeal to the wisdom of the ordinary man and woman in the street.

Nevertheless, while it would be wrong to simply characterize Hoskyns as a hawk, it is true that he would have preferred a more assertive approach to public relations than that promoted by the CRD. In a note for Keith Joseph, Hoskyns argued that the public were looking for 'self-confidence', not a 'pragmatic tentative effort to find out what people want then offer it to them'. A bold leadership of public opinion, he insisted, must supersede the polling-driven pusillanimity of yesteryear. Hence, Thatcher should adopt a 'take-it-or-leave-it' tone of voice, refusing to compromise with popular misconceptions and left-wing mythology.[228] One can clearly discern the difference between Hoskyns' approach and that of the Steering Committee responsible for drafting the 1979 manifesto by comparing a draft foreword written by Hoskyns in March with the foreword actually published. Apart from being vastly longer (2,500 words compared to 205 in the final manifesto), it also adopted a much more radical and pessimistic tone. Hoskyns wrote that Britain was 'about to arrive at the wrong destination', driven by 'immature' demands for living standards beyond the country's means and an 'innumerate' intellectual culture that suppressed

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[226] Press release by Conservative Central Office News Service of a Party Political Broadcast by Margaret Thatcher MP, 17 January 1979, HP, HOSK 1/217.

[227] Ibid. The three proposed reforms were the outlawing of secondary picketing, the introduction of taxpayer-funded postal ballots for union elections and no-strike agreements in essential services, such as the fire service and hospitals.

[228] Draft note by Hoskyns for 'KJ' on 'Electoral themes'.

traditional British values. These values were, however, not extinct. Having 'retreated inside the barricades', they could be articulated inside the family, as well as within small groups of friends and fellow workers, but were not successfully expressed in a wider society dominated by a naïve intellectual elite.[229] Given that Hoskyns' draft was peppered with the jargon of Stepping Stones, it is conceivable that he intended it as more of a shot across the Steering Group's bows than a serious proposal. Nonetheless, it seems clear that the eventual 1979 campaign was more cautious than he would have hoped for.

This frustration boiled over into apoplexy with regard to the Conservatives' party political broadcasts in the run up to the election. The hiring of a professional advertising agency, Saatchi & Saatchi Garland Compton [hereafter Saatchi & Saatchi], in 1978, no doubt diminished the influence of Hoskyns, Strauss and the CPS on the party's public relations strategy. In a letter to Joseph in April 1978, Hoskyns complained that the strategy was in the hands of people who were 'at best neutral, at worst hostile' to Stepping Stones.[230] Indeed, Tim Bell, the Managing Director of Saatchi & Saatchi, recalled how Peter Thorneycroft, as chairman of the controlling committee, retained 'total decision-making power'.[231] He was joined on the committee by Gordon Reece, the party's Director of Public Relations, Alistair McAlpine, the Party Treasurer, and Chris Patten in the guise of CRD Director. Hoskyns revealed to Joseph his paranoia that these men would employ PPBs as a 'neutraliser' of Stepping Stones. He requested that he and Strauss be included on the committee and that Thorneycroft be 'bridged' somehow into the Stepping Stones strategy framework.[232] While these missives might well have been overly hyperbolic, Hoskyns was correct that PPBs were made according to strategic outlook contrary to

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[229] Draft by Hoskyns of foreword for the Conservative Party General Election manifesto, 28 March 1979.

[230] Copy of letter by Hoskyns to Joseph relating to party political broadcasts.

[231] Tim Bell, 'The Conservatives' Advertising Campaign', in Robert M. Worcester and Martin Harrop (eds), *Political Communications: The General Election Campaign of 1979* (London; George Allen and Unwin, 1982), pp.11-26, at p.11.

[232] Copy of letter by Hoskyns to Joseph relating to party political broadcasts.

his own. Tim Bell, in spite of his later pretensions to be a bone dry 'Real Conservative', negated the Stepping Stones approach to some degree with his agency's rigid focus on 'shopping basket' issues of prices, taxes and wages.[233] For their advertisements in women's magazines, for example, Saatchi & Saatchi created mock supermarket posters with slogans like 'Special offer: up eight pence!'.[234] Their second PPB perpetuated the theory of cost-push inflation, which monetarist-inclined Conservatives were trying to move away from.[235] Even the widely acclaimed 'Labour Isn't Working' posters of 1978 were, with hindsight, relics of an era in which the government's priority was deemed to be the maintenance of full employment. During the election campaign, Hoskyns was left to rage impotently against what he saw as a relapse into old habits. PPBs, he complained, were being made on an 'impulse basis'.[236] He wrote to Thatcher that he was 'horrified' to learn that they had been made without any reference to an electoral 'game-plan' (presumably his) and urged that they be scrapped.[237] Evidently, even prior to the transition to government, Hoskyns found it difficult to launch radical reform of governing strategies in a context where those with whom he was working possessed much shorter time horizons.

3.7 Conclusion

During Margaret Thatcher's four-and-a-half years as Leader of the Opposition, the 'caravanserai of right-wing radicals', who had reviled the Conservative Party's political approach during the Heath years, gained a foothold within the party.[238] Alfred Sherman's brainchild, the CPS, was the nodal point that coalesced marginal

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[233] Bell, *Right or Wrong*, p.xi; Moore, *Thatcher: Volume One*, pp.387, 411.
[234] Bell, 'The Conservatives' Advertising Campaign', pp.16-18.
[235] Ibid., p.18.
[236] Copy of letter by Hoskyns to Joseph relating to party political broadcasts.
[237] Note by Hoskyns for Margaret Thatcher MP on 'Election 'Game-plan'', 4 April 1979, HP, HOSK 1/242.
[238] Keith Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 3. The End of the Postwar Era: Britain Since 1974* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p.193.

figures and also the catalyst for the conversion the Conservative Party to an altered approach to public relations. Sherman, like his recruits Hoskyns and Strauss, considered the transformation of the climate of opinion to be *the* critical prerequisite for both the attainment of power and effective Conservative government thereafter. The collapse of the 1970-74 government had proven, from their perspective, that efforts to influence public behaviour through economic stimulants and restraints, along with the mediation of corporate interest groups, were politically and intellectually bankrupt. The alternative strategy of the CPS was to change public behaviour by altering mindsets – a cognitive, rather than material, form of coercion. It was, in many respects, a deeply populist strategy, declaring the public interest to the public without mediation through intermediary institutions like trade unions and state-owned corporations.[239] But, for Sherman, this represented something akin to a restoration, recovering an organic political culture - founded on 'two-way contacts with the grass-roots' - from the technocratic and socialistic distortions of recent decades.[240] Unlike the mechanistic procedures of corporate bargaining, this political culture would be 'self-justifying', producing its own internal referential system that bound all members of the political nation into a singular body politic.[241]

The CPS did have some success in altering the Conservative Party's approach. Unlike in 1964-70, the Conservative leadership dedicated a much greater proportion of their attention to the politics of support. While great effort was dedicated to Thatcher's speech-writing process and the crafting of her public image, policy-making was often fudged.[242] Indeed, contrary to common assumptions, Thatcher did *not* come to power in 1979 with a precisely formulated policy programme. John Ramsden claimed that 'there has rarely been a modern opposition that has hedged its bets so completely (in terms of actual *pledges*) and still retained a

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[239] Ibid., p.204.

[240] Alfred Sherman, 'Why the Image Men are Against the Grain', *Guardian*, 20 July 1987, p.20.

[241] Ibid.

[242] David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh reported that drafts of the 1976 policy statement, *The Right Approach*, were monitored in order to forestall repudiation by Edward Heath. David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p.78.

reasonable credibility'.[243] The Conservatives entered office in 1979 with ambivalent stances on incomes policy and denationalization.[244] The fact that a popular impression arose that a radical departure from the Heath years had taken place is testament to the New Right's success in transforming the party's approach to public relations rather than any sudden revolution in party policy.

But, while the CPS was successful in initiating an evangelical campaign, it could only ever, in the long run, be a marginal influence on the Conservative Party. In fact, its *raison d'être* was to operate at the margins, expanding and transforming the boundaries of public debate. In this sense, a marginal influence need not be a small influence. Given that Sir Keith Joseph was chairman of both the CPS and the ACP, the Centre had easy access to the party leadership in opposition and provided the language through which it formulated its sense of mission. Indeed, the Centre's role in providing material for speeches and rethinking the party's approach to public relations was a, if not *the*, central aspect of the reconfiguration of the Conservatives' politics of support. Yet, while the CPS was *de facto* a major part of the Conservatives' organization, it remained, *de jure*, an independent entity, which was funded privately. In other words, it enjoyed the best of both worlds: significant influence over the party leadership without the disciplines and intellectual constraints that come with incorporation into a party machine. However, as we shall see in the following chapter, when the Conservative Party entered government, the 'trail blazers' would encounter more formidable barriers to informal influence.

Some of these barriers were structural. It was much harder for 'irregulars' outside the formal apparatus of the state to exert influence when ministers were serviced by a permanent, politically neutral civil service on the Northcote-Trevelyan model. Hoskyns came to believe that the hierarchies and departmental divisions of

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[243] John Ramsden, *The Making of Conservative Party Policy: The Conservative Research Department since 1929* (London: Longman, 1980), pp.309-10.

[244] Conservative General Election Manifesto 1979, MTFW (110858). The manifesto called vaguely for 'responsible pay bargaining', which would still be conducted 'In consultation with the unions'. It promised to denationalize only the recently nationalized shipbuilding and aerospace industries, along with the National Freight Corporation.

Whitehall undermined the holistic coherence of the Stepping Stones agenda, dividing a systematic approach into 'departmental bits and pieces'.[245] In spite of Thatcher's later reputation for constitutional iconoclasm, she was, at least in her first term, almost deferential in her adherence to the established precedents of Cabinet government.[246] What Nigel Lawson termed a 'creeping bilateralism', in which Thatcher increasingly conducted government personally, in conversation with her closest advisors - Alan Walters, Bernard Ingham and Charles Powell – did not emerge fully until much later in the decade.[247] From Hoskyns' perspective, Thatcher's first government adopted a disappointingly conventional approach.[248]

Indeed, Thatcher's administrative mindset, which valued practical problem-solving over abstract long-term speculation, was another constraint on the implementation of a programme that insisted on laying the groundwork through a lengthy process of public persuasion *prior* to grasping the nettle and implementing radical reforms. As we have seen, hints of these temperamental differences were evident even prior to 1979. Nevertheless, one should be wary of attributing tensions exclusively to the personal idiosyncrasies of Thatcher, Hoskyns and Sherman et al. Regardless of how well they planned for the long-term, politicians have been forced invariably to adapt their approaches in light of the pressure of 'events'. Hoskyns, in his new position as Director of the Number 10 Policy Unit, would find his own attention diverted to crisis management as the economy entered recession. It was much more difficult to implement a step-by-step approach to public persuasion while reacting simultaneously to the unfolding of events in unanticipated ways. The Stepping Stones approach, which assumed that public debate would facilitate and simplify the process of administration, therefore came to seem dangerously optimistic. Over time, the Thatcher governments would adjust to an approach that

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[245] Hoskyns, *Just In Time*, p.396.

[246] Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.409.

[247] Ibid., p.431.

[248] For Hoskyns' critique the Whitehall structure and the Thatcher government's limited efforts to reform it, see John Hoskyns, 'Conservatism is Not Enough', *Political Quarterly* 55 (1984), pp.3-16.

they believed would alter popular attitudes and behaviours *without* recourse to open public debate.
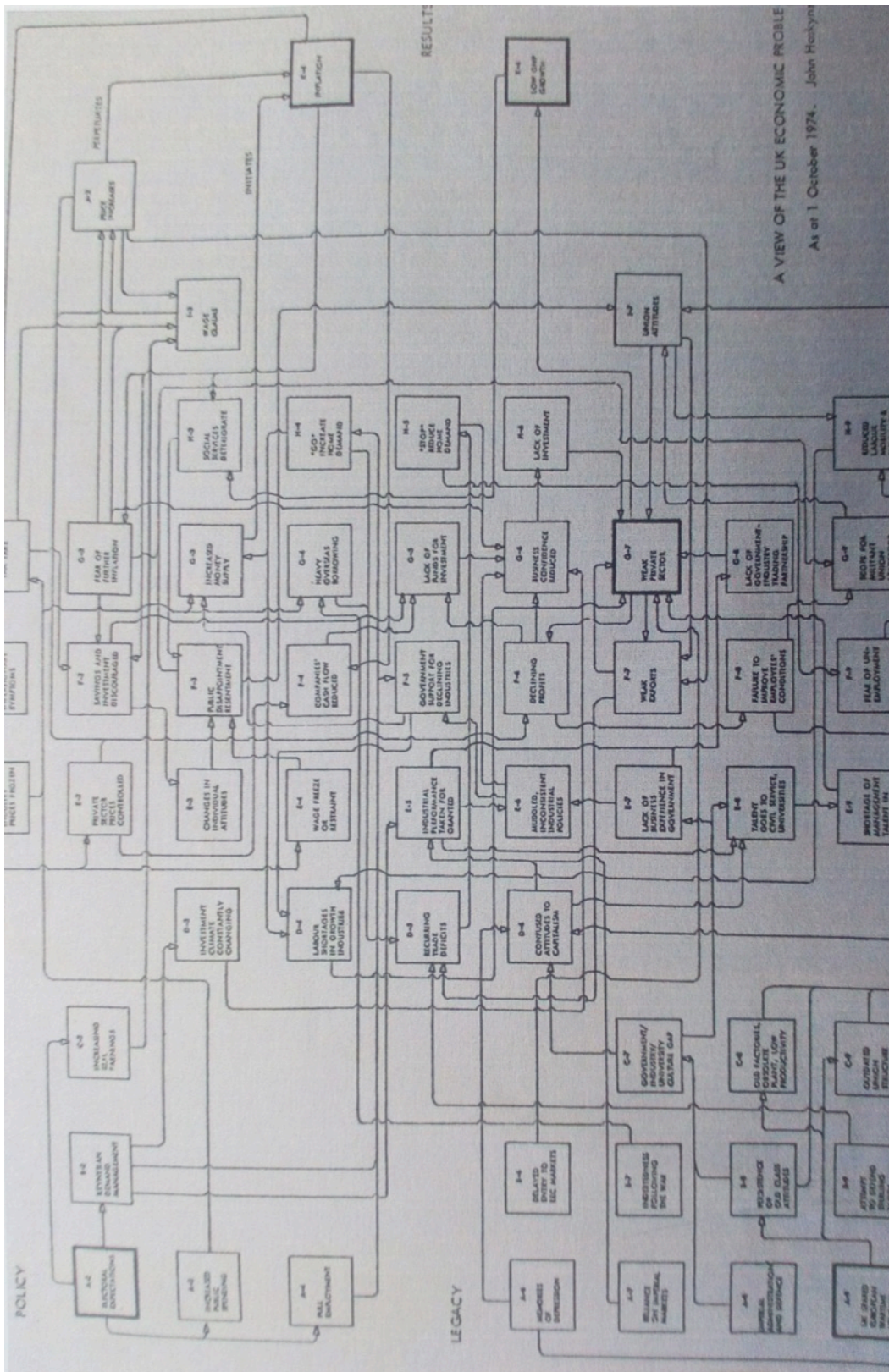
Figure 1: Copy of Hoskyns' 'wiring' diagram, entitled, 'A view of the UK economic problem, as at 1 October 1974', HP, HOSK 1/1.
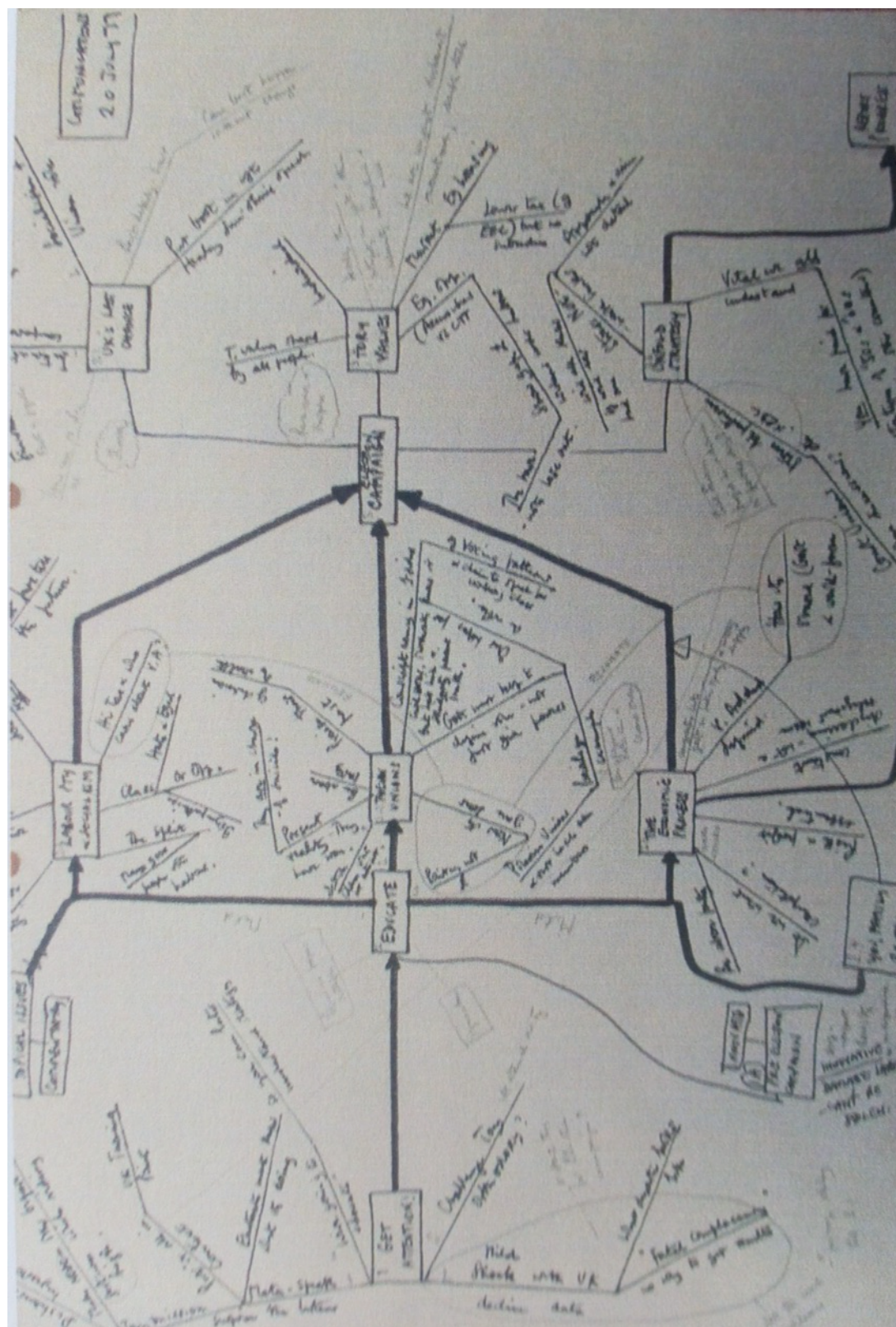
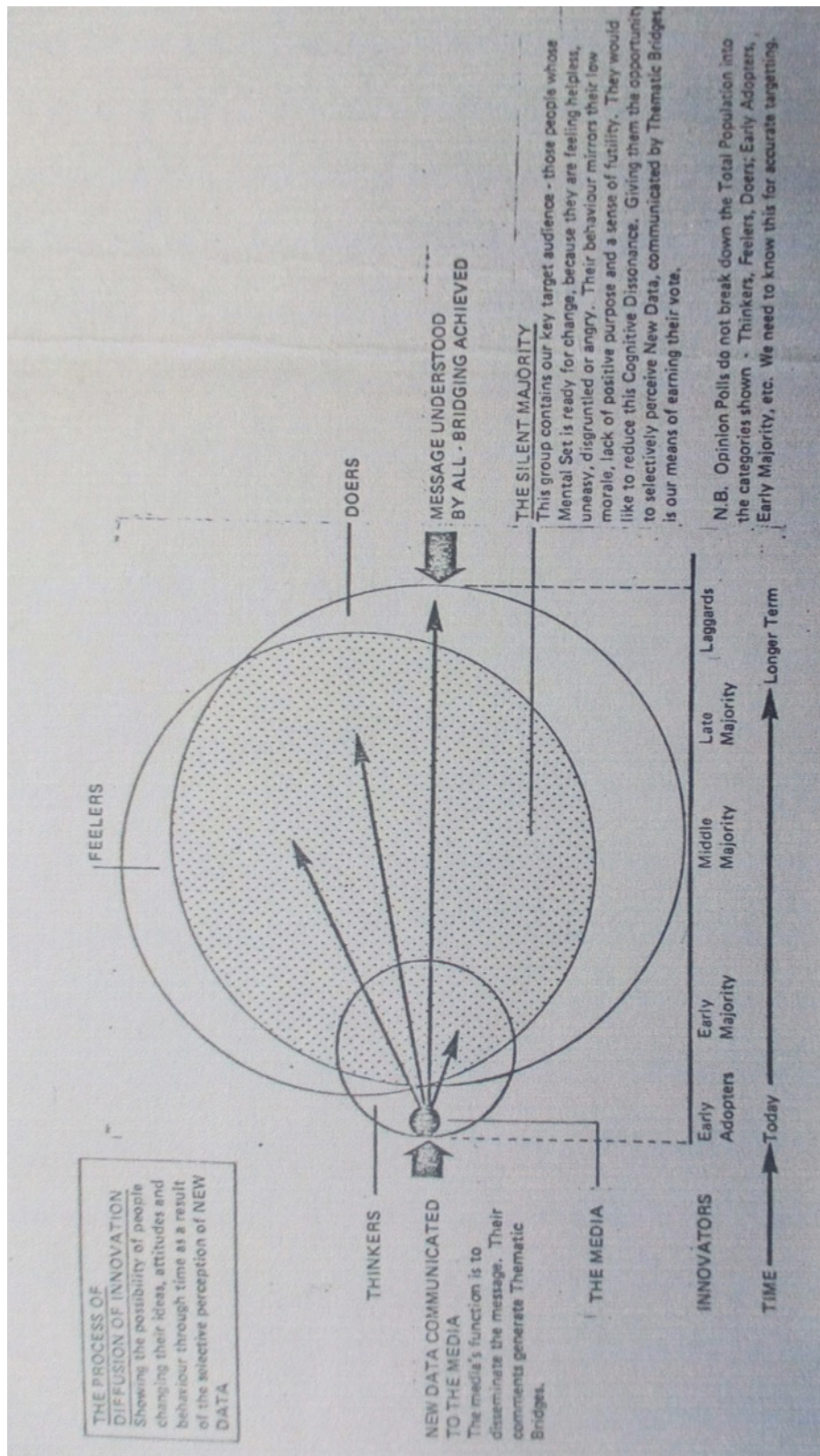Figure 2: John Hoskyns, Communications Diagram, 20 July 1977, HP, HOSK 1/24.

Figure 3: 'The Process of Diffusion of Information', 'Stepping Stones' Report, Diagram 6, November 1977, TP, THCR 2/6/1/248.

Chapter Four: The New Right in Power

Upon entering government in May 1979, the Conservative Party under Thatcher's leadership gave the outward impression of being what Keith Middlemas described as a 'fundamentalist movement of political liberation', evangelizing in the name of fundamental truths of British national life.[1] Not coincidentally, the New Right's privileging of rhetoric over technocratic policy formulation coincided with a reaction against material determinism within historical study and the social sciences (see Chapter Two).[2] The cultural theorist Stuart Hall, notably, employed a Gramscian intellectual framework to characterize 'Thatcherism' as a hegemonic project, which sought to restructure ideological discourses in order to construct a 'populist common sense' amongst the public that was amenable to petty-bourgeois interests.[3] What Hall had discerned was the New Right's preoccupation with transforming the climate of public opinion and altering the terms of political debate, such that what they deemed to be essential reforms were no longer considered 'unthinkable'. Historians writing in the tradition of the 'new political history' have maintained this attention to rhetoric, demonstrating how 'Thatcherism' sought to establish a new imagined constituency of 'ordinary' hard-working individuals and families.[4] In this respect, it seems justified (if a little unsubtle) to describe the Conservative Party, during Thatcher's period as leader, as possessing hegemonic aspirations.

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[1] Keith Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 3. The End of the Postwar Era: Britain Since 1974* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp.193-94.

[2] Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor (eds), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain Since 1820* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), pp.1-26; Steven Fielding, 'High Politics', in David Brown, Robert Crowcroft and Gordon Pentland (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern British Political History, 1800-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp.32-47.

[3] Stuart Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show', *Marxism Today* (January 1979), pp.14-20.

[4] Jon Lawrence and Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Margaret Thatcher and the Decline of Class Politics' in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds) *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.132-47; Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics and the Decline of Deference in England, 1968-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp.158-63.

Nevertheless, focusing exclusively on discursive strategies cannot provide a comprehensive explanation for the evolution of the Thatcher governments' policies over the course of the 1980s. As much as Hoskyns and Strauss envisaged that their Stepping Stones strategy would, by means of political communication, restructure the political terrain and co-ordinate the government's activities, the realities of governance proved much more disorderly. Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite has recognized that the concern of 'Thatcherites' with an apparently autonomous political language and culture was accompanied by a parallel commitment to liberal economic reforms, which were founded upon a view of human nature whereby rational actors responded predictably to material incentives.[5] While it would be easy to assert that the governments' simultaneous attention to structural and superstructural means of catalysing political change reflected the paradoxical or contradictory nature of a unitary 'Thatcherite' ideology, when one pays closer attention to the granularities of internal debates within government, it becomes evident that different 'Thatcherites' possessed fundamentally contradictory epistemological assumptions. Whereas Hoskyns and Strauss decreed that public attitudes must change *prior* to the implementation of material reforms, others questioned this model of causation. As we shall see, influential figures - who were more likely to draw upon neo-liberal political theories - disputed the efficacy of rhetorical exhortation as a means of moulding public behaviour, convinced that only the restructuring of material incentives could serve that purpose. Persuasion, according to this model, did not need to precede reform; rather, it proceeded from it.

This philosophical discordance within 'Thatcherism' has not, until now, been accentuated in historical accounts. Indeed, 'Thatcherism', in spite of its hegemonic aspirations, was *not* a consistent, unitary ideology. Over time, the Thatcher governments' evolved from what Middlemas termed a 'declaratory regime', to a programme of 'managerial praxis'.[6] Partly, this reflected the growing ascendancy of

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[5] Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics and the Decline of Deference*, p.154.

[6] Keith Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 3. The End of the Postwar Era: Britain Since 1974* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p.277.

a younger generation of Conservatives who were influenced more by neo-liberal theories emerging from the United States than by the post-structuralist ideas that had inspired the CPS in its early years. Microeconomic tinkering, rather than moral exhortation, was this group's *modus operandi*. However, ideological developments were never autonomous from political circumstances. They were shaped and waxed and waned in light of short-term political exigencies as well as long-term strategy. The Stepping Stones strategy's declaratory efforts to uphold certain norms of behaviour were not necessarily accepted uncontested by the public. While the scope of this study permits judgement on the extent to which the Thatcher governments transformed public opinion only by inference, it seems clear that Conservatives, especially in the early 1980s, were often frustrated by the public's failure to respond to their entreaties to modify their behaviour.[7] A number of journal articles have drawn attention to the 'oppositional spaces' of 1980s Britain, as left-wing opponents of the government sought to contest the government from the local sphere.[8] While interest groups like the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Greater London Council (GLC) forced the Thatcher government into a series of 'wars of movement', of even greater concern to the government were broader public attitudes.[9] Students of the reception of political discourse have stressed how members of the public are not simply passive receptacles of political messages; rather they contest and recast them according to their own variegated experiences and memories.[10] Although the Policy Unit had constructed an elaborate model of the

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[7] Ibid., p.275.

[8] Sam Wetherell, 'Painting the Crisis: Community Arts and the Search for the "Ordinary" in 1970s and '80s London', *History Workshop Journal*, 76 (2013), pp.235-49; Diarmaid Kelliher, 'Contested Spaces: London and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike', *Twentieth Century British History*, 28 (2017), pp.595-617; Sarah Kenny, 'A "Radical Project": Youth Culture, Leisure, and Politics in 1980s Sheffield', *Twentieth Century British History* 30 (2019), pp.557-84.

[9] Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 3*, pp.278-310. Middlemas employed Gramsci's terminology to differentiate between short-term tactical campaign ('wars of movement') and long-term strategic campaign ('wars of position').

[10] David Cowan, 'The "Progress of a Slogan": Youth, Culture, and the Shaping of Everyday Political Languages in Late 1940s Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 29 (2018), pp.435-58; Steven Fielding, Peter Thompson and Nick Tiratsoo, *England Arise! The Labour Party and Popular Politics*

'Process of Diffusion of Information', the government soon discovered that there were limits to the extent to which public opinion was malleable from above.

The New Right, upon entering government, found that their political agency was more constrained in practice than many of them had anticipated. Indeed, one might contend that changing public mores shaped the policies of the Thatcher governments as much as vice versa. By October 1988, Stuart Hall had downgraded the agency of Thatcherism in his analysis to some degree, writing in *Marxism Today* that 'Thatcherism's project is operating on the ground of longer, more profound movements which *appear* to be going its way, but of which it is only occasionally in command'.[11] While Hall was more likely to locate change in the cultural or discursive sphere, other contributors to the 'New Times' edition related economic and social disaggregation to an underlying shift towards a post-Fordist regime of production, in which the search for market niches and just-in-time manufacturing displaced standardized mass production.[12] Nevertheless, whether they employed Marxist or neo-Marxist analytical frameworks, the contributors shared a sense that the Thatcher governments' policies to expand consumer choice and privatize monopoly public industries were reinforcing existing socio-economic trends, rather than reversing them or establishing them *de novo*. More recently, a number of historians, inspired by the 'New Times' concept, have encouraged the writing of accounts of the 1980s that are not overdetermined by Thatcher or 'Thatcherism'.[13] For example, rather than assuming that the Thatcher governments themselves created popular individualism, historians and sociologists have begun to regard it as a long-

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in 1940s England (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Lawrence Black, *Redefining British Politics: Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954-70* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[11] Stuart Hall, 'Brave New World', *Marxism Today* (October 1988), pp.24-29, at p.28.

[12] Ibid. p.28; Robin Murray, 'Life After Henry (Ford)', *Marxism Today,* October 1988, pp.8-13; John Urry, 'Disorganised Capitalism', *Marxism Today*, October 1988, pp.30-33.

[13] Stephen Brooke, 'Living in "New Times": Historicizing 1980s Britain', *History Compass* 12 (2014), pp.20-32; Matthew Hilton, Chris Moores and Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'New Times Revisited: Britain in the 1980s', *Contemporary British History* 31 (2017), pp.145-65.

term development, which was unfolding long before the 1970s.[14] Its origins have been traced to left-wing libertarian tendencies as well as to popular acquisitiveness.[15] Indeed, while demands for greater personal autonomy and freedom of choice might have facilitated the New Right's dismantling of collectivist structures, the flip side - the decline of deference - possessed profoundly unconservative implications.[16] Thatcher and her governments were undoubtedly adept at appropriating long-term changes in popular attitudes and behaviour in their critique of collectivism; yet, to suggest that they were fully in control of these trends, and capable of consistently channelling them towards conservative ends, would be a step too far.

This chapter will expose the frustration and uncertainty that simmered beneath the self-confident public pronouncements of Thatcher's first two governments. Firstly, it uncovers the fate of the Stepping Stones strategy, which envisaged a transformation of public opinion preceding the implementation of 'economic realism'. The transition from oppositional politics to government, however, did not run smoothly. Hoskyns' found himself exasperated with the bureaucratic impediments to centralized co-ordination of the government's strategy. However, Whitehall conventions were not the only obstacles to the Stepping Stones approach. In the second half of the chapter, we shall see that certain members of the government and their entourage (in particular Nigel Lawson and his friend Samuel Brittan) questioned the strategy's analytical basis from the outset. They doubted the ability of the government to exercise a didactic function through exhortation alone. Their approach, inspired by neo-liberal ideas formulated on the other side of the

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[14] Mike Savage, 'Working-Class Identities in the 1960s: Revisiting the Affluent Worker Study', *Sociology* 39 (2005), pp.929-46; Emily Robinson, Camilla Schofield, Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Natalie Thomlinson, 'Telling Stories about Post-War Britain: Popular Individualism and the "Crisis" of the 1970s', *Twentieth Century British History* 28 (2017), pp.268-304.

[15] Richard Cockett, 'The New Right and the 1960s', in Geoff Andrews, Richard Cockett, Alan Hooper and Michael Williams (eds), *New Left, New Right and Beyond: Taking the Sixties Seriously* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999); Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2007).

[16] Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics and the Decline of Deference*, pp.203-04; Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 3*, pp.393, 434.

Atlantic, sought to influence public behavioural patterns by restructuring material incentives. Virginia and Chicago, rather than Peterhouse and the Swinton estate, seemed, by the mid-1980s, to be the party's primary intellectual lodestars.[17] While the influence of a neo-liberal 'think-tank archipelago' or 'thought collective' on the Thatcher governments has been well documented and clearly exerted a strong influence over their economic policies, the extent to which the adoption of a fundamentally neo-liberal approach to generating socio-political change was a belated and contested development has not yet been fully acknowledged.[18] The New Right, which had once defined itself *against* a liberal utilitarian conception of human nature, came eventually to adopt the rationalist outlook it had once abhorred.

These two mindsets – one with a broadly idealist conception of popular mentalities, the other with a rationalist liberal understanding of human nature – will be delineated in this chapter. However, this is not a work of pure intellectual history. It seeks to situate political ideologies in their contemporary context, reflecting on how they related to, and reflected on, the economic and social changes of the 1980s, as well as tracing their evolution and influence over time. Changes in the balance of power between the two general outlooks cannot be assumed to be the result of the persuasive force of argument alone. Rather arguments drew their persuasive power from the degree to which they were perceived to offer agency within the socio-economic circumstances that the government encountered. In many respects, political theories amounted to post-hoc rationalizations of pragmatic policy. As we shall see in the fields of privatization and pension reform, amongst others, political theory derived as much from the practice of policy formulation as vice versa. In this sense, although the governments possessed hegemonic aspirations, to reify their activities into a 'hegemonic project' of 'Thatcherism' would be to elide the very real

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[17] Andrew Gamble, 'Europe and America', in Jackson and Saunders (eds), *Making Thatcher's Britain,* pp.218-33, at pp.229-33; Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 3*, pp.208-09.
[18] Ben Jackson, 'The Think-Tank Archipelago', in Jackson and Saunders (eds), *Making Thatcher's Britain,* pp.43-61; Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (eds), *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neo-Liberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

philosophical divisions within the New Right and, moreover, to overlook the fundamental adjustments in the government's approach over the course of the decade. The struggle to reshape public opinion was in no respect straightforward.

4.1 The Long Campaign

On Bank Holiday Monday, the 7 May 1979, a few days after the Conservative Party's electoral victory, John Hoskyns was summoned to 10 Downing Street to see the new Prime Minister. He recorded in his diary that Thatcher wished him 'to continue Stepping Stones at Number Ten', acting as Director of the Number 10 Policy Unit.[19] The next day, Hoskyns produced a paper outlining his plans for the Unit. His first priority was to recruit Norman Strauss, whom he secured on secondment from Unilever for four days a week. Together, Hoskyns hoped that they could institutionalize within government the strategic, communications-led approach they had pioneered while working at the CPS. In his mind, the endemic short-termism of Whitehall departments derived from an institutional blindness to the holistic and systemic nature of Britain's social and economic problems. A misplaced belief that policies could be formulated to address discrete and classifiable problems had contributed to departmental Balkanization, whereby politicians and officials, confused by the ambiguities and complexities of departmental responsibility, tended to grasp for short-term remedies to systemic problems.[20] Hoskyns hoped that the Policy Unit, working closely with the CPRS, could counterbalance this tendency, co-ordinating a cohesive and long-term strategy. Although the CPRS had been established in 1971 with long-term planning in mind, Hoskyns felt it had degenerated into a 'sub-contracting consultancy', working on the mechanics of policy details prioritized by the cabinet, rather than holistic strategy.[21] Such an approach was inappropriate, Hoskyns argued in a paper circulated to ministers, when they were

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[19] John Hoskyns, *Just in Time: Inside the Thatcher Revolution* (London: Aurum Press, 2000), p.97.
[20] Paper by Hoskyns on his plans for 'The Policy Unit', 8 May 1979, The Papers of Sir John Hoskyns, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge [hereafter HP], HOSK 2/3.
[21] Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p.89.

'dealing with social systems, not mechanical ones'. Implicit in this outlook was a repudiation of a governing philosophy, which, in Cartesian terms, had isolated matters of policy from matters of the mind. 'Government', he contended, 'has to persuade people to think and feel differently, before the behaviour of the system can change'.[22] Under the Policy Unit's leadership, Hoskyns hoped that this truly would be a new style of government, whose first priority would not be legislative tinkering, but transforming 'Mental Sets'.

Accordingly, the Policy Unit dedicated itself to a 'Long Campaign', designed to generate a 'sea change' in public attitudes. Although Hoskyns felt that the original Stepping Stones programme had achieved some success in overturning socialist and trade union mythology (to the extent that the media were catching up with public attitudes), there was still much work to do to 'alter the Tory stereotype' and 'establish new voting criteria'.[23] It is striking that, in spite of the Conservatives' electoral victory, those in the Policy Unit retained a stridently pessimistic reading of public attitudes. Norman Strauss estimated that the 'built-in value problems within the system' would take up to a decade to alter, suspecting that the party's upturn in electoral fortunes concealed the tenacity of 'old union class war stereotypes and myth'. In such circumstances, attempts at precipitous economic reform could provoke atavistic behavioural responses, especially amongst the working-class population of the North, whose psychology remained 'unfavourable'.[24] Hence, Hoskyns warned against making 'over-corrections' in an attempt to reverse British decline. The process of changing popular attitudes, he reiterated, was like building a matchstick St Paul's. In another vivid analogy, Hoskyns likened taking office in

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[22] Paper by Hoskyns on 'Government Strategy', 12 June 1979, circulated by Margaret Thatcher to various ministers on 14 June 1979, in advance of government strategy meeting on 18 June 1979, HP, HOSK 2/12.

[23] Policy Unit paper on 'Long campaign, first draft', 5 November 1979, HP, HOSK 2/34.

[24] Note by Norman Strauss on 'Criteria of evaluation', 30 October 1979, HP, HOSK 2/32; Minutes of a meeting at 10 Downing Street to discuss Hoskyns' paper on Government strategy (attended by Margaret Thatcher), 18 June 1979, HP, HOSK 2/14.

1979 to 'jumping onto the footplate of a runaway train'.[25] As the interlocking processes of moral and economic deterioration continued to accelerate, the new government would have work out how to operate the controls before they could decelerate the train and then finally attempt to turn it around. In Stepping Stones jargon, this denoted that a period of 'Stabilisation' would be required, prior to commencing the eventual 'Rebuilding' process. To attempt the latter without the former would be 'like trying to pitch a tent in the middle of a landslide'.[26] Hence, while the Policy Unit's agenda under Hoskyns might have been radical, envisaging nothing less than a transformation in British political culture, its strategy was rather conservative, anticipating incremental change over a five to ten year period.[27]

However, Hoskyns' prognosis of a lengthy period in which the government would have to accustom the public to economic hardship in pursuit of long-term recovery was hardly music to the ears of politicians whose positions depended upon courting public popularity. Given that Treasury forecasts suggested that, by early 1981, unemployment would exceed two million and inflation would remain in double digits, Hoskyns argued that it would be foolish to raise the public's expectations of a rapid turnaround.[28] If the government were to resist pressure to reflate the economy, they would first have to accustom the public to the idea that things would get worse before they got better. Nevertheless, the prospect of fighting a future election in an inauspicious economic climate still petrified the Conservative leadership. At a meeting at 10 Downing Street to discuss Hoskyns' paper, senior cabinet ministers recoiled at the concepts of 'stabilisation' and a 'J-curve' recovery. 'Stabilisation' was taken to connote stagnation and, in any case, they agreed 'it would not be acceptable to have a period of no growth lasting for as long as three to four years'. Not only did this not correlate with the electoral cycle, it was felt that in

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[25] 'Long campaign, first draft', HP, HOSK 2/34.

[26] Paper by Hoskyns on 'Government Strategy', HP, HOSK 2/12.

[27] Note by Strauss on 'Criteria of evaluation', HP, HOSK 2/32.

[28] Draft paper for Hoskyns by 'GS [George] Cardona' on 'Winning the next general election', 15 June 1979, HP, HOSK 2/13.

such circumstances there would be a danger of the party appearing to revel in counter-inflation for its own sake. Consequently, the attendees concluded that Hoskyns would have to merge the stabilization and rebuilding phases of his strategy.[29]

For Hoskyns and Strauss, this response exemplified the failure of senior ministers to absorb their strategic perspective. The concept of 'stabilisation' denoted, in an abstract sense, the deceleration of vicious cycles of moral and economic decline; it was not intended as a propaganda slogan for public consumption. Hoskyns warned that attempts to introduce free market reforms, such as council house sales and employee share schemes, prior to the intellectual rehabilitation of the concept of 'capitalism', could provoke a Pavlovian response as commentators relapsed into the Labour mythology of the inevitable conflict between capital and labour.[30] Initial priority must be accorded to altering the public's perception of reality rather than necessarily altering reality itself.[31] Nevertheless, Hoskyns attempted, begrudgingly, to propitiate ministers with a package of 'accelerator' proposals, formulated with the assistance of the CPRS, which would expedite the transition into the rebuilding phase and mitigate the pain of stabilization. While some of these measures apportioned material benefits, priority was given to measures with 'psychological shock effect', which would assist in the process of educating the public to accept the Policy Unit's analysis of economic decline.[32] Accelerator measures, such as the publicizing of restrictive labour practices, attempts to combat 'oversensitivity' to environmental considerations and the 'de-privileging' the civil service, could all be incorporated into the theoretical framework of Stepping Stones, in which cognitive

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[29] Minutes of a meeting at 10 Downing Street to discuss Hoskyns' paper on Government strategy, June 1979, HP, HOSK 2/14; Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p.111.The meeting was attended by cabinet ministers Margaret Thatcher, William Whitelaw, Keith Joseph, Jim Prior, Michael Heseltine, John Nott, Christopher Soames and Geoffrey Howe, along with the civil servants and advisors Clive Whitmore, Kenneth Berrill, David Wolfson, Tim Lankester and John Hoskyns.

[30] Note by Hoskyns for Margaret Thatcher MP, with attached detailed sections of the 'The 'Long Campaign' paper', 14 December 1979, HP, HOSK 2/40.

[31] Note by Strauss on 'Criteria of evaluation', HP, HOSK 2/32.

[32] Paper by Hoskyns on 'Government strategy: paper number 2', 18 July 1979, HP, HOSK 2/19.

change amongst the electorate preceded material repercussions.[33] Even so, Hoskyns could not help but feel that the government were being 'side-tracked', relapsing into the short-term policymaking of 'post-war British government at its most inadequate'.[34]

Hoskyns' great vexation was that, even when ministers accepted the Policy Unit's intellectual case in principle, they failed to adopt the management techniques necessary to implement a systems approach. Partly, this could be attributed to the temperamental impatience and 'frenetic mode of operation' of Thatcher herself, which precluded long-term strategic planning.[35] In his memoirs, Hoskyns, rather condescendingly, suggested that Thatcher's 'critical faculties were poor' and that she possessed 'little feel for language'.[36] He pleaded with her to stick to her primary role of 'political entrepreneurship', presenting the government's vision to the public, rather than trying to micromanage policy details herself.[37] Under her leadership, the party was 'in a state of total mental confusion', with Jim Prior and Ian Gilmour orchestrating 'a general mood of impatience, frustration and ridicule' from within the cabinet.[38] In the face of this obstructionism, Hoskyns' purported allies were proving ineffectual. Reviewing progress in February 1980, he bemoaned the 'failure…to get anything moving on the Angus Maude front in co-ordinating communications'.[39] Meanwhile, Howe, Joseph and Howell had, in Hoskyns' mind, become 'gathered up in the embrace of Whitehall'.[40] Whereas, while working with the CPS in opposition,

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[33] Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p.141.

[34] Detailed Policy Unit paper, 'Review of progress: May 1979-February 1980', 18 February 1980, HP, HOSK 2/68; Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p.112.

[35] Copy of letter by Hoskyns to Angus Maude MP (Paymaster General) on the activities of the Policy Unit, 21 May 1980, HP, HOSK 2/122.

[36] Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p.131.

[37] Copy of handwritten note by Hoskyns for Margaret Thatcher MP , 7 March 1980; with attached detailed paper, 'Government strategy: review of progress to date', 7 March 1980, HP, HOSK 2/81.

[38] Policy Unit paper, 'Review of progress', HP, HOSK 2/68.

[39] Ibid. Maude, reaching the end of his career, seemed eager to offload work and return to writing. Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, pp.118-119; Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), p.131.

[40] Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p.100.

the Stepping Stones team had been able to consult Conservative frontbenchers relatively easily, their work transcending the artificial boundaries of departmental briefs, they now faced bureaucratic impediments to holistic strategizing. Thatcher dismissed proposals for a Chequers 'teach-in' and a Selsdon-style weekend retreat, which Hoskyns hoped would provide an opportunity to convert colleagues to strategic thinking and allow them to stand back from the day-to-day pressures of government.[41] In their absence, ministers filled their diaries with what Hoskyns termed 'busyness', occupying their time reacting to events, unable to see the wood for the trees.[42]

The 'blue sky thinking', increasingly in vogue in the business world, proved difficult to translate to a Whitehall context. Hoskyns' insistence that 'The IBM "THINK" signs are no gimmick' seemed to fall on deaf ears in an environment culturally averse to abstract thinking.[43] Faced with what he perceived as bureaucratic inertia, Hoskyns reported back to his colleagues in the CPS 'First Eleven', that the 'bureaucratic ant heap' of the civil service was 'Public Enemy Number One'.[44] Despite having envisaged the Policy Unit's role to be that of leading a transformation in popular attitudes, the realities of government led Hoskyns to become preoccupied with inward-looking concerns of institutional reform, which were a prerequisite, in his mind, to any attempt to reshape the climate of public opinion through a co-ordinated communications strategy. Alfred Sherman reinforced Hoskyns' assessment of bureaucratic detachment from popular culture, drawing upon a Samuel Finer essay on the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms of 1854, which argued that the British civil service had developed its own endogenous criteria of conduct, distant from the

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[41] Policy Unit paper, 'Government strategy: review of progress to date', HP, HOSK 2/81.

[42] Copy of letter by Hoskyns to Lord (Peter) Thorneycroft (Chairman, Conservative Party) on Hoskyns' 'Long campaign' paper, 22 February 1980, HP, HOSK 2/72.

[43] Policy Unit paper, 'Review of progress', HP, HOSK 2/68.

[44] Minutes of the Third Meeting of First Eleven at the Centre for Policy Studies, 19 November 1980, CPA, CRD 4/4/40. The 'First Eleven' consisted of Hugh Thomas, Jan Hildreth, John Hoskyns, R. V. Jones, Christopher Monckton, Nigel Morgan, Terence Price, Norman Strauss, Max Beloff, John Kelly and Alfred Sherman. See Richard Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution 1931-1983* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p.294.

concerns of business.[45] Thatcher did, however, attempt to introduce a businessman's approach into Whitehall, appointing the former CEO of Marks and Spencer, Sir Derek Rayner, to lead an Efficiency Unit in the Cabinet Office.[46] Although he was no doubt sympathetic towards the motives of Rayner's Unit, Hoskyns was nonetheless disappointed at the conceptual limitations of its approach. Administrative reforms, such as cutting the number of officials and reorganizing departments, did not get to the heart of what Hoskyns viewed as the *cultural* pathology of Whitehall.[47] The problem, in his eyes, was less the organizational structure of the civil service than the behavioural dispositions inculcated in its recruits, which cultivated a culture of conformity, rather than freethinking.

This growing exasperation with the 'dinosaurs' of officialdom reinforced the anti-elitist tendency within Hoskyns' declinism. As we have seen, the New Right attempted to reconcile their desire for a restoration of traditional values with a populist critique of the post-war Whitehall elite, drawing upon concepts like '*debourgeoisement*' and the 'BRIT-TRAP' to explain the elite's reconciliation to socialist ideas and values supposedly alien to the British character. It has been noted frequently that the New Right, especially Sir Keith Joseph, drew intellectual support from a contemporaneous trend in declinist historiography, which emphasized the social and cultural, rather than structural, origins of Britain's economic malaise.[48] The most prominent of this school of thinkers, Martin Wiener, contended that the entrepreneurial spirit of the industrial revolution had been suffocated by a cultural reverence of rural aristocratic ideals and disdain for industry, propagated by the

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[45] Alfred Sherman and Mark Garnett, *Paradoxes of Power: Reflections on the Thatcher Interlude* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2005), pp.95-96.

[46] Peter Hennessy, *Whitehall* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1989), p.592.

[47] Note probably by Hoskyns for Margaret Thatcher MP on 'The Derek Rayner proposal' relating to the civil service, 7 July 1980, HP, HOSK 2/142.

[48] James Raven, 'British History and the Enterprise Culture', *Past and Present* 123 (1989), pp.178-204; Shirley Robin Letwin, *The Anatomy of Thatcherism* (London: Fontana, 1992), pp.250-51; Richard Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London, Simon & Schuster, 2009), pp.187-88.

public schools.[49] This was a narrative also taken up by the new chairman of the CPS, the historian Hugh Thomas, who suggested that the ballooning British administrative state was the malign product of a quasi-Roman attitude, inculcated by public schools, that valued service to the state over individual initiative.[50] These arguments accorded well with Hoskyns' emphasis on the agency of culture in determining economic performance; yet, at the same time, their embrace reflected a growing alienation amongst elements of the New Right from the gentlemanly culture of the civil service and the Conservative Party. Hoskyns scorned the hierarchical organization of Whitehall, which demanded deference towards the 'Secretary of State for this and that', and lamented how ministers wasted their time 'fooling around in white tie', rather than adopting a dynamic and innovative approach to Britain's endemic problems.[51] Although he possessed a natural sympathy for Conservatives' scepticism regarding the capacity of government intervention, he regretted their aversion to institutional reform. He was left to conclude that 'Conservatism is Not Enough'.[52]

However, one might contend that Hoskyns had himself contributed to the inflexibility amongst senior ministers that he so maligned. Institutional barriers and cultural conservatism were not the only constraints on the government's actions. The conscious attempt, embodied in the Stepping Stones project, to formulate a common language and a common mythology within the Conservative Party had deliberately aimed to foster an 'almost ascetic' degree of discipline, such that the government would be able to resist political pressures to deviate from its political strategy.[53] Now, when faced with the exigencies of government, Hoskyns and Strauss railed against the very inflexibility that they had once encouraged. Of course, Strauss

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[49] Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[50] Hugh Thomas, *History, Capitalism and Freedom* (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 1979), pp.11-12.

[51] Policy Unit paper, 'Government strategy: review of progress to date', HP, HOSK 2/81; Policy Unit paper, 'Review of progress', HP, HOSK 2/68.

[52] John Hoskyns, 'Conservatism is Not Enough', *Political Quarterly* 55 (1984), pp.3-16.

[53] Note by Norman Strauss, 'Some background thinking on the NVG', 9 June 1977, HP, HOSK 1/13.

sought to distinguish between the necessity to maintain consistent 'Criteria of Evaluation' and the danger of dogmatic adherence to particular means of achieving those ends; but this nuance was hardly central to the original Stepping Stones approach.[54] The forthrightness of Thatcher's public statements had, in effect, staked the government's credibility on a public perception of consistency. Bernard Ingham, the chief press secretary at Number 10, recognized this early on in the government, emphasising, in a minute to Angus Maude, that 'Spot the U-turn is likely to become a national sport'.[55] Rhetorical discipline was now undermining the government's ability to perceive the holistic nature of Britain's problems.

The government's determination not to be seen to give way, particularly to the pressures of organized labour, threatened to override the nuance of Hoskyns' position on trade union reform. The 'hawks'' stance of apparently implacable opposition to trade union demands demonstrated, according to Hoskyns, a failure to appreciate the pressures that precluded responsible behaviour amongst trade union officials. While equally scathing of the 'goodchapmanship' of Tory 'doves', he nonetheless prescribed a 'Jim Prior series' of speeches and articles to encourage a wider intellectual reorientation regarding the role of trade unions in society.[56] Only when the myth, as Hoskyns saw it, that trade unions' bargaining was responsible for their members' living standards was publicly refuted could the movement's leaders be expected to behave more responsibly. This approach required a degree of nuance in the party's public communication that was not present in the 'not for turning' rhetoric. Hoskyns suggested that the government 'should spell out very clearly indeed that these are the things that we will not do, and that these are what we mean by a U-turn'.[57] In a governmental context, when words were tied to actions, political language proved to be a less malleable resource than Hoskyns had hoped, constraining as much as facilitating political innovation.

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[54] Note by Norman Strauss on 'Crisis '80', 19 May 1980, HP, HOSK 2/117.
[55] Bernard Ingham minute to Angus Maude, 'Presentation', 15 October 1979, MTFW (120280).
[56] 'Long campaign, first draft', HP, HOSK 2/34.
[57] Ibid.

From Hoskyns' perspective, ministers conflated strategic discipline with political inflexibility. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), a four-year series of monetary growth targets, introduced in March 1980, was, contrary to its name, not a strategy in Hoskyns' sense of the word. Rather, he argued, it was a statement of fixed objectives, which was no substitute for a comprehensive, holistic understanding of Britain's economic position.[58] Duncan Needham has suggested that, in formulating the MTFS, Nigel Lawson, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, was influenced by a rational expectations approach, anticipating that economic actors would adjust their behaviour according to the government's monetary targets.[59] This somewhat deterministic outlook dismayed Hoskyns, who stressed the need for a *network* of policies to alter behaviour. One-dimensional monetary targets were an inadequate response to the 'endless mirrors' and 'destabilisers' that were influencing public behaviour. Social and moral, as well as economic influences, intersected in the vicious cycle of British decline. Hoskyns thus called for a broadening of the concept of 'stabilisation' beyond just the withdrawal of industrial subsidies and control of £M3, invoking the memory of Hjalmar Schacht, the Weimar-era economics minister, whose currency reform demonstrated that flexibility was not necessarily synonymous with irresolution.[60]

Indeed, much of the animus of both the Policy Unit and the CPS came to be directed towards the Treasury. Hoskyns accused the department of entirely ignoring his distinction between 'stabilisation' and 'turn around', believing that monetary restraint was a straightforward matter of governmental determination, rather than a long-term process demanding broader behavioural changes in wider society.[61] Instead of taking heed of the advice of the Policy Unit, Hoskyns noted how the financial journalist Samuel Brittan, a personal friend of Nigel Lawson, possessed

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[58] Draft copy of Policy Unit Paper on 'Government Strategy: paper number 3', 18 December 1980, HP, HOSK 2/228.

[59] Duncan Needham, *UK Monetary Policy from Devaluation to Thatcher, 1967-1982* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.147. Although Lawson has downplayed this in retrospect.

[60] 'The 'Long Campaign' paper', HP, HOSK 2/40.

[61] Policy Unit paper, 'Review of progress', HP, HOSK 2/68.

greater influence over Treasury ministers. Brittan's 'zeal of a recent convert' to monetarism, Hoskyns later wrote, made him an unreliable source of advice.[62] Indeed, the two men's philosophies regarding the nature of political change differed profoundly (see below). The principle of the primacy of culture, implicit in Stepping Stones, was not wholly assimilated into a Treasury department, which, naturally, inclined towards an economistic outlook.

Nevertheless, the Policy Unit and CPS were drawn into technical macroeconomic debates, fearing that the government's preoccupation with monetary targets blinded them to the larger picture. Both Hoskyns and Alfred Sherman feared that the soaring value of the pound was wiping out British industry, insisting to Thatcher that this concern was '<u>not</u> confined to soft-minded Keynesians'.[63] In fact, Sherman interpreted the deflationary 1980 Budget as an essentially Keynesian macroeconomic squeeze on the private sector, with the state sector insulated by wage indexation.[64] Given their misgivings about the Treasury's approach, Sherman and Hoskyns resolved to draw upon the CPS's 'reserve army' to bypass the department and channel economic advice directly to the Prime Minister.[65] On Sherman's prompting, Alan Walters returned from Johns Hopkins University in the summer of 1980 to serve as economic adviser to the Prime Minister.[66] Moreover, the CPS commissioned the Swiss economist Jurg Niehans to produce a report on the causes of sterling appreciation. Niehans' report, completed in February 1981, dismissed the government's contention that North Sea oil revenues were responsible, suggesting that the government's monetary policy had significantly exacerbated sterling

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[62] Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p.126.

[63] Policy Unit paper, 'Government strategy: review of progress to date', HP, HOSK 2/81; Sherman minute to MT [criticism of the Budget], 28 March 1980, MTFW (119482).

[64] Sherman minute to MT, MTFW (119482).

[65] Policy Unit paper, 'Government strategy: review of progress to date', HP, HOSK 2/81; Sherman and Garnett, *Paradoxes of Power*, p.112.

[66] Sherman minute to MT ("Need for Better Economic Advice - in re Alan Walters"), 24 April 1980, MTFW (119485).

appreciation and hence the economic recession.[67] Moreover, given that the £M3 measure included interest-bearing deposits, which inevitably became more attractive the tighter the monetary policy, the measure failed to reflect the severity of the real-terms squeeze in liquidity.

The Niehans Report thus provided ammunition for Hoskyns' allegations regarding the government's strategic inflexibility. He informed Walters, Strauss and David Wolfson that he planned to meet with the Prime Minister at Chequers over the Whitsun break in order to suggest the launching of a new Stepping Stones-style project, incorporating lessons learned over the previous two years. He claimed that he would confront Thatcher's 'childish psychology', with her predisposition to apportion blame to colleagues, instilling in her the message that 'It's not enough to be dry'. Rather, the government would have to be 'intelligent, competent and dry' in order to turn its fortunes around.[68]

It is now well established that, in spite of its reputation for contravening counter-cyclical orthodoxy, the 1981 Budget constituted a volte-face, or at least a revision, of the government's deflationary approach.[69] The tightening of fiscal policy was intended to compensate for the reduction in the minimum lending rate, while at the same time redressing the imbalance between the squeeze on business profits and the relative prosperity of individuals who had benefitted from the high exchange rate.[70] Whether or not the principal inspiration came from within the Treasury, or from outside advisers such as Walters and Niehans, it is clear that many of the latter's concerns were met. From Hoskyns' perspective, the Budget amounted to 'a

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[67] Niehans report ("The Appreciation of Sterling - Causes, Effects, Policies"), 7 January 1981, MTFW (128452). Niehans recommended a move towards monetary base control, which he believed would provide a more accurate measure, permitting a more gradual deceleration of inflation.

[68] Note by Hoskyns for 'Mr [David] Wolfson, Mr [Alan] Walters, 'Mr [Norman] Strauss' on 'Review of strategy with the Prime Minister', 7 May 1981, with attached paper on 'Strategy review with Prime Minister', 5 May 1981, HP, HOSK 2/321. It seems doubtful that Hoskyns quite spoke so brazenly to the Prime Minister in person.

[69] Needham, *UK Monetary Policy*, pp.155-56.

[70] Nigel Lawson, *Memoirs of a Tory Radical* (London: Biteback, 2010), p.67.

Dunkirk, not an Alamein', averting unmitigated disaster.[71] Yet, many Conservatives have retrospectively mythologized it as the moment when, in the face of the received wisdom of 364 economists, the government stuck to its guns, bringing forth an unprecedented period of continuous growth.[72] That the economists who wrote to *The Times* overlooked the monetary easing in many ways assisted the government, who were determined to avoid any impression of a U-turn. Alan Walters recorded Thatcher's embarrassed reaction to the Niehans Report, recording her insistence that 'NO-ONE must know about it'.[73] Indeed, the government quite consciously sought to maintain a public impression that they were inflexibly wedded to an austere budgetary strategy. Although the Treasury moved towards a broader range of monetary indicators, including the exchange rate, Howe insisted that, 'for the sake of the credibility of the strategy', £M3 remained the public target for the 'medium term'.[74] One can therefore discern the emergence of a disjunction between the government's rhetorical and economic strategies.

Such a disjunction amounted to a contravention of the philosophy of Stepping Stones, which had envisaged strategic communication as the harbinger of policy, from which it was inseparable. This apparent loss of strategic coherence prompted Hoskyns to convene, in December 1981, a group of eight key ministers and advisors at David Wolfson's house at Westwell, Oxfordshire, in order to launch a 'new and broader Stepping Stones programme'.[75] The resultant report made explicit the

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[71] Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p.283.

[72] See, for example, David Smith, 'How Maggie beat the experts', *Sunday Times*, 12 March 2006, MTFW (110688); Philip Booth, 'How 364 economists got it totally wrong', *Daily Telegraph*, 15 March 2006, MTFW (110695); Dominic Lawson, 'Tebbit: We shouldn't trust the economists', *Daily Mail*, 30 May 2016, p.2.

[73] Alan Walters diary (1981) *[whole year transcribed as a single document]*, MTFW (137536).

[74] No.10 minute (MT meeting with Chancellor, Wass, etc), 10 February 1981, MTFW (113996). Howe's successors as Chancellor, Nigel Lawson and John Major, effectively attempted to restore a fixed exchange rate by shadowing the Deutschmark and advocating membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). See Ross McKibbin, 'A Brief Supremacy: The Fragmentation of the Two-Party System in British Politics, c.1950-2015', *Twentieth Century British History* 27 (2016), pp.450-69, at p.464.

[75] Hoskyns et al - Westwell Report ("Stepping Stones to 1989") *[draft of report]*, MTFW (141997); Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, pp.357-58. In addition to Hoskyns and Wolfson, the meeting was attended by

concern that the government's 'oratorical vision [could]…disintegrate into empty platitudes unless Government policy appears to be leading towards its realisation'. In other words, if the 'oratorical vision', composed of values and ideals, failed to correlate with the government's 'strategic vision' (its policy programme), then the former would become 'like a mirage which recedes as one walks towards it'.[76] Rather than formulating policies *a priori*, they must accord with the beliefs and values of the 'great mass of ordinary voters'.[77] In order to develop and sustain this affective connection, the Westwell Report emphasized that a central aspect of governance was 'political education' of the public. This meant taking the public into the government's confidence, explaining the thought process behind policymaking. In fact, the report stressed that, in order to 'get across to the public the "learning curve"' of the government, they should not be afraid to 'frankly admit one or two of our mistakes'. Crises, such as the recession of 1980-81, should be considered 'opportunities to accelerate change, educate public opinion and enhance government credibility'.[78] Moreover, contrary to received political wisdom, Hoskyns argued that ministers should not be afraid to 'talk over the public's head', conveying the complexity of the government's task.[79] From this perspective, the government's 'credibility' rested on an ongoing conversation with the electorate, rather than adherence to a fixed set of targets.

Minutes of the CPS First Eleven's meetings reveal even more frank discussion of the critiques of the government's performance that underlay the Westwell Report. The Conservative leadership were accused of 'tilting at symptoms rather than tackling the cause of the [economic] disease', which was believed to be

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David Howell, Cecil Parkinson, Norman Lamont, Alan Walters, Douglas Hague and Norman Strauss. Nigel Lawson, significantly, was unable to attend (see below).

[76] Westwell Report (draft), MTFW (141997), p.8.

[77] Ibid., p.74.

[78] Ibid., pp.39-40.

[79] Ibid., p.47.

an epiphenomenon of a deeper moral corruption within British society.[80] The CPS had attempted, during the Conservatives' period in opposition, to imbue the party with a 'fundamental, philosophical base'. However, by the end of 1980, the First Eleven had concluded that the 'product [had] failed in its initial launch'. The government had lapsed into a utilitarian approach, failing to look beyond the immediate problems of government. Instead, the First Eleven agreed that the government 'should aim at completeness', establishing a holistic philosophy to counter the socialists' 'comprehensive <u>Weltanschauung</u>'.[81] Sherman lamented that, for many in the government, rejection of the 'Butskellite consensus' was deemed synonymous with a return to *status quo ante*. Such a return to an imagined free market society was impossible as, according to his idealist philosophy, 'Revolutions inherit their antecedents'.[82] Writing in *The Guardian* after leaving the CPS, Sherman accused the government of lapsing into a rationalistic classical liberal ideology, which was blind to the complexities and contingent nature of societal and economic change. The government was, according to Sherman, beset by those Tories who flaunted their 'pragmatism' and brandished quotations from Burke to exempt themselves from thinking about questions of cause and effect in human affairs.[83] However, he in fact considered the greater danger to the CPS's original agenda to come from the government's putative friends, the 'Utopians and doctrinaires of the Right'.[84] Their rationalistic 'Newtonian certainties' were entirely alien to Sherman's organicist outlook. Looking back from the vantage point of 1988, he drew attention to an apparent philosophical digression led by Thatcher's allies:

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[80] Minutes of the Third Meeting of the First Eleven at the Centre for Policy Studies, 19 November 1980, CPA, CRD 4/4/40.

[81] Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the First Eleven at the Centre for Policy Studies, 17 December 1980, CPA, CRD 4/4/40.

[82] Alfred Sherman, 'Pym's bite at the apple of innocence', *Guardian*, 27 May 1985, p.7.

[83] Alfred Sherman, 'Confessions of a man of ideas fallen among party politicians', *Guardian*, 29 June 1981, p.9.

[84] Alfred Sherman, 'Learning to grab ideas by the horns', *Guardian*, 12 September 1988, p.36.

Take an Adam Smith or a Hayek, empirical and sceptical as they might be and their followers will reify their concept of the market into a Utopian construction in which all will be for the best in the best of all possible worlds…In fighting socialism they become the inverse of socialists, ignoring the dilemmas, paradoxes and antinomies of the human condition, excising the human dimension.[85]

Free market fundamentalism belonged, in Sherman's mind, to the same family of rationalistic philosophies as socialism, venturing to restructure the social order according to logically deduced, universal principles. From his perspective, economic freedom could not be relied upon, in itself, to induce cultural change without a concomitant effort by political leaders to transform the language and mythology of politics.

In many respects, the New Right's assimilation into the corridors of power frustrated the primary mission of the CPS to reshape the climate of opinion. During discussions on the Centre's role in the new government in 1979, Sherman stressed that the CPS had avoided inter-relationship with Conservative Party institutions, especially the CRD, while in opposition. This partly reflected the suspicion the CPS aroused amongst the wider party; however, Sherman insisted that 'Margaret and Keith believed that the Centre (i.e. AS) worked best alone and directly with the public'.[86] This institutional autonomy allowed the Centre to 'think the unthinkable', unconstrained by the electoral accountability of the Conservative Party, while also being able to consider Britain's 'underlying civilizational and psycho-social syndrome' in an abstract, philosophical sense, looking beyond the immediate quotidian problems of governance.[87] A paper outlining the CPS's role after 1979, (probably) written by Sherman, insisted on 'a self-denying ordinance to keep one

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[85] Ibid.

[86] Note on 'CPS, Role, Function, identity, continuation', c.1979, CPA, CRD/D/8/16. Sherman is, characteristically, referring to himself in the third person here.

[87] Note on 'The CPS: Role, Function, Identity', c.1979, CPA, CRD/D/8/16.

step away from policy'.[88] However, following the establishment of a series of Study Groups in the summer of 1979, the Centre became increasingly preoccupied with the minutiae of policy, attempting to establish a 'constructive alternative philosophy to socialism'.[89] In fact, the Enterprise Culture Study Group (ECSG), chaired by Terry Price, explicitly renounced its initial remit. Keith Joseph had requested that the group document the cultural causes of a purported failure to sustain the spirit of enterprise that had apparently flourished in nineteenth-century Britain.[90] In this vein, the LSE sociologist and ECSG member, Jan Hildreth, suggested that they trace the 'migration of attitudes' from the education system to management.[91] However, the final report of the ECSG concluded that that the 'real villain' in the story of British decline was not to be found in the cultural sphere, but in the institutional structure of the political system, and in particular the politicization of the trade unions.[92] As they moved closer to the corridors of power, even the CPS veered towards a more materialistic perspective on politics.

While some, like Hoskyns, considered institutional reform to be a means of removing the barriers that precluded the establishment of an innovative holistic approach to government, other members of the New Right came to view institutional reform as an end in itself, attempting to undermine and establish material interest groups within Britain's social structure (see below). Faced with what he perceived as the failure of the government, ensconced within the bureaucratic embrace of Whitehall, to embrace his agenda, Hoskyns concluded, in November 1981, prior to the Westwell meeting, that 'it would be better to leave, rather than tinker with bits and pieces'.[93] Encouraged by Sherman, he presented the Prime Minister with what

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[88] Ibid.

[89] Report of the Personal Capital Formation Study Group, February 1981, CPA, CRD/D/8/16.

[90] Report of the Enterprise Culture Study Group, February 1981, CPA, CRD/D/8/16. Martin Wiener probably inspired Joseph's establishment of the ECSG.

[91] Minutes of meeting on the 'Enterprise Culture' at the Centre for Policy Studies, 10 February 1981, CPA, CRD 4/4/40.

[92] Report of the ECSG, CPA, CRD/D/8/16.

[93] Copy of letter from John Hoskyns to Margaret Thatcher announcing his intention to resign, 18 November 1981, HP, HOSK 2/405.

was effectively an ultimatum. Unless he became permanent secretary of a powerful new Prime Minister's Department, which would hold power over the CRD and CPRS and truly institutionalize his strategic approach to government, he would leave entirely.[94] Hoskyns sought, through the strengthening of executive government, to break down what he deemed to be the artificial distinction between political and governmental activity, which had constrained the Policy Unit's efforts to establish a centrally co-ordinated governmental programme. A 'blockbuster' memorandum to the prime minister, which Hoskyns co-authored with David Wolfson and Ronnie Millar, underscored the point to Thatcher that 'No.10 cuts you off from colleagues, from friends and indeed from the real world'.[95] The prime minister's isolation from the 'real world', they argued, resulted in a disregard for public opinion and a relapse into the old assumption that a successful economic strategy would automatically reap electoral dividends. Wolfson argued that Thatcher should 'never again forget that [the public] voted for you, and trust you, because of what you said at St. Lawrence Jewry, not because you know more than they do about M3 and the P.S.B.R. [Public Sector Borrowing Requirement]'.[96] This moralistic, oratorical vision of Conservatism was, however, no longer the government's guiding light.

Indeed, from the end of 1981, there was a clear breakdown in relations between Thatcher and many of the intellectual irregulars upon whom she had relied during her time as Leader of the Opposition. Hoskyns suspected that Thatcher's receipt of the 'blockbuster' memorandum marked the point at which their relationship was irrevocably damaged.[97] In it the authors bemoaned the government's failure to adopt the management strategies prevalent in the private

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[94] Copy of handwritten note by Hoskyns to Margaret Thatcher MP, 4 December 1981, attaching his paper, 'A strategy for the next 5 years', 4 December 1981, HP, HOSK 2/415; Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, pp.355-56. Hoskyns later downgraded his demand to control over the CPRS, which would play a 'clandestine PMD role'.

[95] Hoskyns, Wolfson and Millar memo for MT ("Your Political Survival"), 20 August 1981, MTFW (210187).

[96] Ibid.

[97] Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p.327. Thatcher allegedly retorted that 'No one has ever written a letter like that to a prime minister before'.

sector, describing her personal management competence as 'non-existent'.[98] Such personal strictures no doubt reinforced the alienation between Thatcher and her advisers, whom she considered impertinent in their lack of respect for ministerial status and disregard for constitutional proprieties. As Peter Hennessy has noted, Thatcher's reputation for anti-establishment radicalism has obscured the conservatism of her attitude to constitutional issues, especially during her early years as prime minister.[99] Walters recorded in his diary that the prime minister was outraged by the 'backstairs' meeting that advisers had arranged with ministers at Westwell.[100] Hoskyns subsequent departure, in April 1982, coincided with a growing unease among senior ministers at the implications of having a 'reserve army' of pseudo-intellectuals connected to the government. Thatcher found herself writing to MPs in order to assure them that 'views expressed by Mr Alfred Sherman' did not represent a 'semi-official opinion or decision by the British Government'.[101] Acerbic mavericks, who had been a great asset when instilling a sense of mission during the opposition years, were harder to incorporate into a governmental context, where their disruptive tendencies threatened to subvert established lines of authority and, in Sherman's case, publicly embarrass the government. Hugh Thomas, the CPS's chairman, resorted to writing to Sherman, imploring him to 'put the interests of the Prime Minister and the party for the moment before your journalistic integrity'.[102] The latter's resistance to attempts to 'muzzle' him led Thomas to conclude by early 1983 that 'Alfred would be inappropriate to run the Centre or indeed anything', just as it would be inappropriate to ask Beethoven to administer the Viennese Opera

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[98] Hoskyns, Wolfson and Millar memo for Margaret Thatcher, MTFW (210187). They went on to criticize her tendency to bully colleagues, taking advantage of their reluctance to answer back to a woman, and her failure to attribute credit to others.

[99] Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.409-10.

[100] Alan Walters diary (budget), 5 January 1982, MTFW (144179).

[101] MT letter to David Alton MP (future of Hong Kong), 30 November 1981, MTFW (121721). In this case Thatcher was responding to Sherman's outspoken views on the future of Hong Kong.

[102] Hugh Thomas letter to Alfred Sherman, 11 March 1983, MTFW (131226).

House.[103] The unorthodox mode of operation of Sherman's CPS proved incompatible with institutionalization.

Of course, contrasting personalities did play a large role in the breakdown in relations between Sherman and Thomas. Thomas considered Sherman to be 'unbalanced' and extravagant, leading him to refuse to allow the latter a credit card.[104] In the summer of 1983, Sherman was placed on a year's sabbatical for the ostensible purpose of writing a book. Of course, Sherman's suspicions that Thomas, in coordination with Thatcher's PPS, Ian Gow, were trying to 'muzzle' him were correct.[105] They feared that he might publicly accuse Keith Joseph of cowardice or say something 'disgraceful' about Clive Whitmore, the prime minister's principal private secretary.[106] Sherman's response to Thomas's concerns regarding his behaviour was to accuse him of being 'an old woman prone to panic and a bit of a peacock'.[107] One cannot but conclude that Sherman was temperamentally unsuited to working in someone else's institution.

Yet, the fact that a placeholder, appointed by the government, now chaired the CPS did reflect a significant change in the institution's role. In fact, in 1979, Sherman had denied that the CPS was an 'institution'; rather, he defined it as 'an emanation of the personality of two leading members', actively hostile to the CRD and large parts of the Conservative Party.[108] Thatcher's accession to the premiership attenuated this organic relationship, leading Sherman to fear that the CPS would 'degenerate into one more coven of party hacks', losing its independence and radical ethos.[109] Indeed, following Sherman's (permanent) departure on 'sabbatical', Thomas redefined the CPS's role as an 'in house' research organization, with a

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[103] Hugh Thomas letter to Ian Gow (Sherman and the future of the Centre for Policy Studies), 25 April 1983, MTFW (131242).

[104] Ibid.

[105] Alfred Sherman letter to Ian Gow (problems in the Centre for Policy Studies), 14 March 1983, MTFW (131226).

[106] Thomas letter to Gow, 25 April 1983, MTFW (131242).

[107] Sherman letter to Gow, 14 March 1983, MTFW (131226).

[108] Note on 'CPS, Role, Function, identity, continuation'.

[109] Sherman letter to Gow, 14 March 1983, MTFW (131226).

particular focus on international affairs, reflecting his academic interests as an historian.[110] This 'Partifying' and 'de-Shermanisation' of the CPS was anathema to Sherman.[111] Like Hoskyns, Sherman feared that government, and by association the CPS, were turning away from his ideal of populist conservatism towards an institutionalized short-termism informed by an excessive sensitivity to opinion polling. By the middle of the decade, Sherman wrote in his memoirs, Thatcher's governance amounted to 'facilitating changes which had already been generated in the bowels of British society itself', rather than leading a moral renaissance of the British nation.[112] In 1984 he had expressed these fears that the original conservative ethos of the New Right was in danger of being lost, warning Gow and Wolfson that 'not all "Thatcherites" are Conservatives, and not all Conservatives are Thatcherites'.[113]

From the perspective of hindsight, it seems apparent that, rather than proceeding along a consistent ideological trajectory, 'Thatcherism' entered a new phase towards the end of Thatcher's first administration. Writing in *Marxism Today* in June 1984, Andrew Gamble recognised that, prior to 1984, the Thatcher governments had not made a substantial impact on the legislative record. Rather, their attention had been directed principally towards 'reconstructing the field of debate', in order to transform what was politically possible.[114] Thatcher's position of relative weakness, in which a large section of her cabinet were sceptical towards her economic and political strategy, meant that she pursued what Hennessy has termed a 'twin-track solution', in which the Policy Unit and outside advisers like Alan Walters

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[110] Hugh Thomas minute for Margaret Thatcher ('The Future of the Centre for Policy Studies'), MTFW (136484).

[111] Alfred Sherman memorandum to David Wolfson and Ian Gow, 'Conditions for the Centre's Survival', 3 August 1984, The Papers of Baroness Thatcher LG, OM, FRS, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge [hereafter TP], THCR 2/6/3/155.

[112] Sherman and Garnett, *Paradoxes of Power*, p.125.

[113] Sherman memorandum to Wolfson and Gow, 3 August 1984, TP, THCR 2/6/3/155.

[114] Andrew Gamble, 'The Lady's Not For Turning: Thatcherism Mark III', *Marxism Today* (June 1984), pp.8-14, at pp.8-9.

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provided her with political support.[115] Their position outside the formal hierarchies of the governmental machine in fact suited advisers like Hoskyns and Strauss, who advocated a holistic, oratorical approach to political leadership and regarded short-term legislative concerns to be a hindrance to their efforts to transform British political culture. Paradoxically, therefore, the strengthening of Thatcher's hold over the Conservative Party following Britain's emergence from recession and the Falklands victory, could well have weakened the Stepping Stones approach to government. With a party chairman and cabinet who were personally loyal to her, Thatcher no longer needed to pursue a 'twin-track'. Just like the CPS, the Policy Unit became, following Hoskyns' departure, more akin to a research unit working closely with Whitehall departments. The government's 'grand vision of economic and political advance', was now to be realised less by persuasion or exhortation, than by widening what Gamble termed the 'concrete experience of being a commodity owner in a capitalist society'.[116]

4.2 Disaggregation

The cabinet reshuffle, following the Conservatives' general election victory in June 1983, is often regarded as the moment when Thatcher was finally able to design a cabinet in her own image, dismissing 'wet' rivals like Francis Pym and doling out 'jobs for her boys'.[117] Certainly, the new generation of ministers, such as Cecil Parkinson, Leon Brittan, Norman Tebbit and Nicholas Ridley, felt a personal loyalty to the Prime Minister. However, describing them as 'Thatcherite' obscures the profoundly different way in which many of them thought about politics when compared to Thatcher herself. Nigel Lawson, who was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, recognized this, writing in his memoirs that, unlike Thatcher, who was guided by 'gut instinct' and a sense of identification with the upper-working and

[115] Hennessy, *The Prime Minister*, p.409.
[116] Gamble, 'The Lady's Not For Turning'.
[117] Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography. Volume Two: Everything She Wants* (London: Allen Lane, 2015), pp.64-103; Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, pp.178-80.

lower-middle classes, ministers like Leon Brittan and himself were more inclined to develop policy according to 'reason and experience'.[118] This faith in rationalism and empiricism was divergent, if not antithetical, to the idealism and organicism propagated by the CPS who had supported Thatcher's rise to the party leadership.

Andrew Gamble was one commentator who, in the mid-1980s, discerned a philosophical divide within the New Right between those who he classified as 'neo-liberals' and those better described as 'neo-conservatives'. The compatibility of these philosophies derived from a common opposition to state intervention in economic affairs. Yet, while they both subscribed to what Gamble termed as the 'doctrine of the free economy and the strong state', they did so for differing ends.[119] For neo-liberals, the strong state was an instrumental means to achieve the ultimate end of a free market economy. As Ben Jackson has established, neo-liberal theorists, especially the early German ordo-liberals, never espoused a pure *laissez-faire* classical liberalism; rather, state intervention was deemed necessary to consciously establish and enforce a competitive marketplace.[120] Nevertheless, they did not revere the authority of the state *per se*. 'Neo-conservatives', by contrast, considered the free market as an instrumental means of restoring state authority and, in particular, the sanctity of private property.[121] The dismantling of egalitarian and corporatist constructs was, for neo-conservatives, a prerequisite to the restoration of traditional moral and institutional frameworks. Associates of the CPS, Sherman had insisted, were 'Tories first, (economic) liberals only second'.[122] While this order of precedence might have held in opposition, as Thatcher and her associates

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[118] Lawson, *Memoirs*, pp.163-64.

[119] Andrew Gamble, 'Smashing the State: Thatcher's Radical Crusade', *Marxism Today*, June 1985, pp.21-26, at pp.21-22.

[120] Ben Jackson, 'At the Origins of Neo-Liberalism: The Free Economy and the Strong State, 1930–1947', *Historical Journal* 53 (2010), pp.129-51.

[121] Gamble, 'Smashing the State', p.22.

[122] Alfred Sherman memorandum to CPS colleagues (Credo), 18 November 1974, MTFW (111907), p.2.

pontificated about the moral decay of a socialist society, in government material reforms became the pre-eminent concern.

Gamble's typology, while perhaps reifying distinctions within what was a subtler spectrum of outlooks, certainly identified an emerging philosophical divergence within the party. The almost mystical reverence of established institutions exhibited by the likes of Sherman was certainly less pronounced amongst younger Conservatives. Nevertheless, to suggest that the ultimate ends of those who emphasized neo-liberal economics diverged fundamentally from more traditionalist Conservatives is overdrawn. As we shall see, those, (predominantly younger) members of the party who might be classified neo-liberals, such as Nigel Lawson, deemed the imperatives of the free market to be the most effective agent of moralization. It was their conception of the means by which public attitudes and behaviour might be altered, rather than their normative vision, which contrasted with the philosophy that had shaped the New Right's approach in opposition. Whereas, during the 1970s, the CPS had considered the transformation of public opinion to be a prerequisite to material changes in policy, by the early 1980s an increasingly influential body of opinion within the party rejected this chain of reasoning.

Although it was perhaps natural that the exigencies of government compelled a greater attention to the technicalities of policymaking, it is also true that certain ministers and advisers, who rose through the ranks in the early 1980s, had never subscribed to an anti-materialist philosophy. They fundamentally questioned the Stepping Stones philosophy, which sought to effect cultural change and transform public opinion prior to policy reforms. Nigel Lawson felt that the Stepping Stones exercise was 'at times removed from political reality'.[123] (Hoskyns would no doubt have rejected the implication of an immutable 'political reality'.) A discussion paper, circulated among shadow ministers in January 1978, provides an insight into Lawson's contrasting philosophy and political *modus operandi*. Contrary to Hoskyns' contention that the Conservatives ought to openly discuss the complexity

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[123] Lawson, *Memoirs*, p.17.

of the country's problems in order to persuade the public of the need for fundamental change, Lawson believed it would be 'politically inept to the point of lunacy' to attempt such an exercise. 'After all', he continued, 'the language of politics is simplification'. In fact, rather than relying on rhetorical persuasion, Lawson suggested that 'Politically, the key to our approach should be divide and rule…buying off a small but key group of workers in each industry' in order to facilitate economic liberalization.[124] This was a long way from Hoskyns and Strauss's aspiration to transform the 'Mental Sets' of a majority of the population.

For Lawson, public education would best be achieved not through exhortation by politicians, but through expanding the concrete experience and incentives of capitalism. This outlook was implicit in his own personal hobby horse: vegetable allotments. Lawson was convinced that this 'somewhat offbeat and seemingly trivial suggestion [held] potentially significant electoral and political significance'. In 1978, he proposed that a future Conservative government should legislate to compel local authorities to turn over any land not used for development for the provision of allotments. The local authority would then compile a register of allotment holders, granting them twenty-one year leases and giving preference to employees of nationalized industries. A prominent PR campaign would arouse enthusiasm and ensure that the allotments became popularly known as 'Thatchers'. Unlike grandiloquent sermons on national identity, Lawson believed his scheme would 'provid[e] the rootless with root' (quite literally).[125] Identity, according to this schema, would arise from material ownership. Although this allotment scheme might seem hare-brained, it prefigured the Conservative government's efforts to widen property and capital ownership from the mid-1980s; except instead of turnips, workers would be encouraged to accumulate equity in the telecommunications

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[124] Discussion paper by Nigel Lawson on current economic topics, 16 January 1978, The Papers of Nigel Lawson (Lord Lawson of Blaby), Christ Church, Oxford [hereafter LP], Lawson/1/1978.

[125] Nigel Lawson note, 'A note on allotments', 1 June 1978, The of Papers of Lord Howell, Churchill College, Churchill Archive Centre, Cambridge [hereafter DHP], HWLL 2/4/119.

industry. Changing the distribution of property, rather than the public's 'Mental Sets', became the primary means of reversing British decline.

Indeed, in his comments on the final Stepping Stones report in the summer of 1978, Lawson diverged quite fundamentally from Hoskyns and Strauss's approach. He invoked Samuel Brittan's Henry Simons Lecture to argue that rather than being a peculiar problem derived from Britain's anti-industrial spirit, the 'English disease' was characteristic to a particular stage in economic development whereby special interest groups had accumulated sufficient collective power to prevent the full use of the nation's economic resources.[126] From Brittan's liberal perspective, Britain's corporate logjam was a universal material stage of economic development, not a cultural pathology.[127] Individuals had naturally coalesced into antagonistic interest groups on the basis of their rational actions. Thus, in order to alter this situation, the government would need to reorient individuals' rational interests. Lawson was hence inclined to agree with the Stepping Stones conclusion that the government should seek to strengthen the individual's non-trade union loyalties. However, given that the abuse of corporate monopoly positions was a structural flaw in the economic system, this could not be achieved purely through exhortation. Lawson stressed that the 'Main problem is *not* extreme left union leaders, but abuse of monopoly position'. Hence, 'measures', rather than 'propaganda', would be required to extricate Britain from the quagmire.[128] Changing the attitudes of British workers would not, in Lawson's mind, be sufficient to alter the system in which they operated.

Lawson's response to the Westwell Report in January 1982 reveals how he pushed for what could be termed a material turn in government, remaining sceptical of the strategy adumbrated by Hoskyns and the Policy Unit. Although Lawson was unable to attend the Westwell meeting, he studied the resultant report and sent his thoughts to Hoskyns. While he retained a constructive tone, Lawson was clearly

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[126] Nigel Lawson, 'Comments on John Hoskyns' Final Report', 5 June 1978, DHP, HWLL 2/4/1/19.

[127] Samuel Brittan, 'How British is the British Sickness', *The Journal of Law and Economics*, 21 (1978), pp.245-68.

[128] Lawson, 'Comments on John Hoskyns' Final Report'.

exasperated with Hoskyns' blue-sky thinking. He concluded that 'while I wholly agree we (Ministers) must think politically, electorally & strategically, I do not see us being able to do it on the comprehensive & systematic scale I suspect you envisage'. Partly, this was down to practicalities. Lawson hoped that Hoskyns would not consider him 'irredeemably weedy' if he pointed out that 'Ministers really <u>do</u> have a time problem so far as the revived Stepping Stones exercise is concerned'.[129] Rather than indulging in grand, holistic strategizing, Lawson stressed that the government should be introducing concrete measures in order to inculcate an economically literate culture through practice. What Geoffrey Howe termed 'the battle for economic reality', was to be won through exposing workers to that reality, rather than merely convincing them of it rhetorically.[130]

As such, Lawson was disappointed that the Westwell Report failed to include any reference to the Conservatives' plans to strengthen worker participation in industry.[131] The Conservative Party's policy of 'total opposition' to the majority report of the Bullock Committee in 1977, which had proposed statutory workers' representation on the boards of large companies, has obscured the extent to which the party was thinking along not too dissimilar lines.[132] While they strenuously opposed granting trade unions control over board appointments, influential figures in the party nonetheless considered worker participation (outside the aegis of the unions) to be a powerful means of suppressing industrial discord. Lawson, in particular, had been a long-time enthusiast for West-German-style codetermination ('*Mitbestimmung*').[133] As we shall see, far from being evidence of a vestigial corporatism, which the party was to soon cast off, these ideas evolved naturally into the later agenda to create a 'popular capitalism'. Lawson, in his response to the Westwell Report, argued that a

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[129] Nigel Lawson note to John Hoskyns on the Westwell Report, 7 January 1982, LP, Lawson/1/1982.
[130] Geoffrey Howe, *Conservatism in the Eighties* (London: CPC, 1982), CPA, CRD 4/17/29.
[131] Lawson note to Hoskyns on the Westwell Report.
[132] On the Conservative Party's response to the Bullock Report, see Adrian Williamson, 'The Bullock Report on Industrial Democracy and the Post-War Consensus', *Contemporary British History* 30 (2016), pp.119-49, at pp.135-37.
[133] Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p.67; Williamson, 'The Bullock Report', p.136.

statutory framework for worker participation would be 'the most important single thing we can and must do'. Such an initiative would serve a didactic function, educating workers *vis-à-vis* economic realities by involving them more closely in the management of their industries, while at the same time overturning the myth that the Conservatives were anti-worker and outflanking the nascent Social Democratic Party (SDP).[134] As Matthew Francis and Amy Edwards have highlighted, during the 1970s, the Conservatives had seriously considered employee share ownership schemes, along the lines of the Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs) conceived by Louis Kelso in the United States. David Howell, chairman of the party's Wider Share Ownership Committee, corresponded closely with George Copeman and the near-eponymous Wider Share Ownership Council (WSOC) pressure group during the opposition years.[135] Such schemes possessed the immediate appeal of providing a constructive alternative to the Bullock proposals, reviving the long-standing Conservative theme of the 'property-owning democracy'.

However, the debate about the adoption of employee share ownership schemes further exposed the conflict between two alternative conceptions of public opinion and political change within the Conservative Party. When Copeman and the WSOC had presented their ideas to the CPS in September 1975, Keith Joseph expressed his scepticism as to whether such schemes would be practicable. While he was inclined to 'instinctively support' schemes to extend the capitalist system, he feared that the WSOC were 'beating the drum about the significance of new policies which in the event brought about minimal changes or were rejected by working people'.[136] In a memorandum to Howe, Joseph suggested that the issue of share ownership and profit sharing needed to be set in 'a much wider context'. In order to

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[134] Lawson note to Hoskyns on the Westwell Report.

[135] Matthew Francis, '"A Crusade to Enfranchise the Many": Thatcherism and the "Property-Owning Democracy"', *Twentieth Century British History*, 23 (2012), pp.275-297; Amy Edwards, '"Manufacturing Capitalists": The Wider Share Ownership Council and the Problem of "Popular Capitalism", 1958-92', *Twentieth Century British History*, 27 (2016), pp.100-123, at pp.107-08.

[136] Meeting of the Wider Share Ownership Council, held at the Centre for Policy Studies, 29 September 1975, DHP, HWLL 2/4/1/9.

achieve their goal of establishing 'a community of interest' between workers and management, they could not fall back on the argument that 'the distribution of ownership would produce this of itself'; rather, they must concurrently 'question fundamentally…the prevailing popular beliefs about the organisation of capital and labour'.[137] In other words, Joseph subscribed to the theory, encapsulated in the Stepping Stones programme, that the transformation of public opinion must precede, or at least run parallel with, changes in government policy. Without this cultivation of public opinion, such reforms might prove unworkable. The 'decreasing level of interest' in the WSOC's ideas within the Conservative Party, discerned by Edwards, was not simply a result of business scepticism *per se*, but rather a feeling by the likes of Joseph that this scepticism, amongst employers and employees, should be overcome prior to further action.[138]

However, not all Conservatives possessed the patience, or indeed the conviction, to trust this step-by-step approach to succeed in transforming public attitudes. David Howell, for example, felt that the Stepping Stones report was at times 'reedy and artificial', with insufficient examples of areas where a Conservative government could 'do something'.[139] Although, as we have seen, Howell argued in print against an economically deterministic perspective on politics,[140] he was nonetheless inclined to advocate material reforms to the distribution of property as, if not a panacea, the central approach to transforming political culture. In the draft manuscript for a book provisionally titled *The Coming Freedom*, Howell traced capital-labour antagonism back to the Enclosure Acts of the late-eighteenth century.[141] Indeed, quoting a *Financial Times* editorial, he suggested Britain's

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[137] Keith Joseph memorandum to Geoffrey Howe, 22 September 1975, DHP, HWLL 2/4/1/9.
[138] Edwards, '"Manufacturing Capitalists"', p.114.
[139] David Howell letter to Keith Joseph, 3 May 1978, DHP, HWLL 2/4/1/19.
[140] David Howell, *The Conservative Tradition and the 1980s: Three Gifts of Insight Restored* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1980). See Chapter Three.
[141] The manuscript was eventually published as *Freedom and Capital: Prospects for the Property-Owning Democracy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981). In it, Howell directly contradicted the anti-materialist philosophy he delineated in *The Conservative Tradition and the 1980s*, which was published the previous year.

contemporary economic problems were a question of 'structure rather than behaviour'.[142] The implication of this was that material reforms to the distribution of property were the key to transforming behaviour, rather than vice versa. Tellingly, Howell drew many of his arguments from the liberal philosopher Karl Popper. Popper denounced the 'emotional, oracular approach' to politics, which he deemed 'part and parcel of the fundamentally irrationalist attitude towards the problems of social life'.[143] The problem was that this 'oracular' and 'irrationalist' outlook was precisely the spirit that had animated the CPS during the previous decade.

Hoskyns' comments upon reading Howell's draft reveal the differences between the two men's philosophies. While the former agreed regarding 'the need for a deliberate policy for the embourgeoisement of the working class', he differed on how best to engineer this. Hoskyns was inclined to treat social divisions as culturally determined, rather than simply being epiphenomenal of divisions in property ownership or occupation. He encouraged Howell to revise his manuscript to stress the 'deliberate proletarianisation of our working class by middle class romantics – intellectuals, lecturers, artists and politicians'. His reading of Popper was that any attempt to exercise compassion on the part of the state would inevitably foment division between 'friends' and 'enemies'. Again, Hoskyns stressed the irrational and ideational, rather than material, aspects of social division. Indeed, in order to overcome these imagined social divisions, he argued that the government would have to persuade 'confused social democrats like Peter Jenkins' and win a public debate about the role of trade unions in British society.[144] Howell, however, had long been less optimistic than Hoskyns regarding the prospects of transforming public attitudes without material intervention. In a lecture to the 1976 CPC Summer School, he had lamented that there was 'still a very very long way to go in altering perceptions on a wide scale', such that it was not safe to assume that 'popular capitalism' would develop naturally in Britain. In fact, Britain's present industrial

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[142] Second draft of *The Coming Freedom*, Chapter Three, c.1979, DHP, HWLL 2/4/1/30.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Letter from John Hoskyns to David Howell, 14 February 1979, DHP, HWLL 2/4/1/30.

structure, according to Howell, ingrained conflict between the requirements for economic growth and the wage bargaining process. His solution was to foster a personal commitment among employees to the efficiency of their firms through share ownership.[145] Social attitudes would hence change as the structure of incentives and capital ownership in the British economy changed. Experience in government would tip the scales towards Howell's perspective.

Following Thatcher's first administration, the Conservatives were faced with a rapidly contracting industrial sector and increasingly active opposition from trade unions and Labour-controlled local authorities. This state of affairs hardly resembled the great reassertion of bourgeois values that members of the New Right had hoped for. As Keith Middlemas recognized, Conservative ministers' experience in government taught them just how densely woven patterns of behaviour and resistance to change were in Britain.[146] Indeed, by the mid-1980s, Conservative thinkers were increasingly sceptical about the possibility of convincing the public to alter their behaviour without active intervention. Shirley and William Letwin, for example, came to accept that 'old habits of thought and feeling die out slowly'.[147] Although Shirley Letwin had once advocated the 'Pied Piper method' of political leadership,[148] she (and her husband) had come to conclude that, given that most people's minds were 'attuned to practicalities and indifferent to theory', a different approach was required to alter their behaviour. 'Preaching' was largely futile. The Conservatives needed 'a method [of persuasion] that is enticing rather than admonitory'.[149] Thus, the Letwins were drawn, like Lawson and Howell, towards schemes to widen share ownership, which, they hoped, would instil a rational interest

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[145] David Howell lecture to the Conservative Political Centre Summer School, Oxford, 10 July 1976, DHP, HWLL 2/4/1/9.
[146] Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 3*, p.315.
[147] Shirley Robin Letwin and William Letwin, *Every Adult a Share-Owner: The Case for Universal Share Ownership* (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 1986), p.7.
[148] Shirley Robin Letwin, 'On Conservative Individualism', in Maurice Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays* (London: Cassell, 1978), pp.52-68, at p.62. See Chapter Two.
[149] Shirley and William Letwin, *Every Adult a Share-Owner*, p.7.

in adopting an anti-socialist outlook as well as educating workers about economic realities through experience rather than admonition.

David Howell's writings after he left ministerial office in 1983 suggested that yet another reassessment of Conservatism was taking place by the mid-1980s. Although Howell believed that the Conservatives had won an intellectual victory over collectivism in the 1970s, this had not automatically translated into a reassertion of traditional middle-class values. In the absence of this bourgeois renaissance, he felt that the Conservatives lacked a positive vision of the future. Overturning past collectivist orthodoxy had hence been a 'blind victory', a 'victory without a purpose'.[150] Rather than simply coalescing around their shared opposition to collectivist ideas and structures, Howell argued that the New Right must develop 'positive knowledge', understanding their surroundings.[151] Indeed, the economy and society that emerged from the early 1980s recession was, according to Howell, radically transformed from that of the previous decade. With smaller units of employment and rising part-time and self-employment, the government was faced with a 'looser and more disaggregated society'.[152] In this context, to believe that one could turn the clock back to the imagined social order of the 1950s was fanciful. Indeed, it was implicit in Howell's call for 'positive knowledge' that the government would have to work with the grain of social and economic change, rather than trying to counteract it. Neo-liberal ideas, which inferred from individuals' material self-interest, appeared more practical than the alternative idealist, moralistic approaches, which seemed divorced from present realities.

Indeed, holistic thinking, such as Hoskyns' systems approach, seemed outdated in an era of radical disaggregation. Ironically, given systems theory's origins in the computing industry, technological advances made it more difficult to think in terms of discrete, hermetic systems. The microprocessor, by facilitating

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[150] David Howell, *Blind Victory: A Study in Income, Wealth and Power* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), pp.xiii-xiv, 6, 128.

[151] Ibid., p.23. Howell acquired this idea from the French futurist philosopher Bertrand de Jouvenel.

[152] Ibid., p.4.

internationalized finance and smaller, more specialized industrial units, made macroeconomic aggregates less reliable. Especially following the abolition of exchange controls in 1979, the British economy was less responsive to centralized control and monitoring. Yet, in spite of reinforcing these trends, Howell believed that the government was still wedded to an outdated perspective, which assumed that rolling back the state would enable a renaissance of a classic form of full employment and industrial economy.[153] The contemporary work of James Robertson and Charles Handy, however, suggested that the future would be characterized by a more informal and flexible labour market, transforming not only Britain's economic structure but also the lifestyles of its people.[154] Not only were the Conservative government, according to Howell, still wedded to an increasingly futile macroeconomic centralism, in the form of the 'new tyrants of the monetary aggregates and the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement',[155] they were also insufficiently sensitive to the real obstacles to the reassertion of traditional moral values. To lambast the 'Permissive Society', as Norman Tebbit did in his 1985 Disraeli Lecture, failed to acknowledge that cultural values were not imposed from above so much as disseminated through an increasingly variegated web of sub-cultural networks in an increasingly pluralistic society.[156] Thus, rather than speaking in generalities as if they were addressing a homogeneous public, Howell argued that the government should engage with the realities of the emerging social order. This meant abandoning centralized direction, whether ordained by macroeconomic aggregates or by moral exhortation.

Howell was perhaps rather disingenuous in understating the degree to which thinking within the Conservative Party was already moving away from a macrosociological perspective by the mid-1980s. As early as March 1983, the

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[153] Ibid., pp.147-48.

[154] James Robertson, *Future Work: Jobs, Self-Employment and Leisure After the Industrial Age* (London: Gower/Maurice Temple Smith, 1985); Charles Handy, *The Future of Work: A Guide to a Changing Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

[155] Howell, *Blind Victory*, p.148.

[156] Ibid., pp.179-80.

Employment Policy Group, chaired by Tim Renton, was warning that the government would have to rethink some of its assumptions. The apparent intractability of high unemployment, especially in light of the advance of robotics, suggested that they would 'not be able to relate economic growth to industrial employment' any longer. Instead, the government would have to foster 'a much wider "disaggregation" of employment'.[157] Entrepreneurialism and self-reliance were not simply desirable character traits from a New Right perspective, but a practical necessity to adapt to the new economic order coming into being. Given that a guaranteed job for life in a single industry could no longer be taken for granted, the government could no longer rely upon managerial paternalism to ensure individuals were able to provide for themselves and their families. Public behaviour would have to be acculturated from the bottom up, through entrepreneurial experience and incentivization, rather than instruction.

Aled Davies's work on pension reforms provides further evidence of this shift in the Conservatives' approach from promoting institutional didacticism to the direct delegation of economic responsibility to the individual. Whereas, in the 1970s, Joseph and Sherman had considered the managers of occupational pension funds to be potential allies in an educational campaign to instruct their members in 'the economic facts of life', over time the Conservatives began to view occupational pension schemes as barriers to economic enlightenment.[158] In practical terms, the former approach proved unfeasible as fund managers proved reluctant to engage in politicized campaigns. Moreover, rising labour mobility and inflation contributed to an 'early leaver problem', as the value of final income-based pensions from previous employers was eroded.[159] However, while the changing social and economic context provided the occasion, the turn towards 'personal and portable pensions' represented a distinct philosophical shift in the Conservatives' approach to altering public

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[157] Report of the Employment Policy Group, March 1983, LP, Lawson/1/1983/2.

[158] Aled Davies, 'Pension Funds and the Politics of Ownership in Britain, c.1970-86', *Twentieth Century British History* 30 (2019), pp.81-107, at p.96.

[159] Ibid., p.17. Employers were reluctant to make employee contributions inflation-proof.

attitudes. Nigel Vinson and Philip Chappell, who formulated the proposals while members of the CPS's Personal Capital Formation Study Group, sought to encourage individuals to take direct responsibility for the management of their own capital without institutional mediation.[160] Personal choice would instruct individual capital owners in the realities of the market through exposure to the imperatives of risk and reward. Vinson's membership of the Policy Group on the Promotion of Enterprise ensured that portable pensions were firmly on the policy agenda prior to the 1983 general election.[161] Although full de-institutionalization never fully came to fruition, perhaps revealing the limits to the Thatcher governments' preparedness to entrust responsibility to the individual,[162] one can nonetheless clearly discern an intellectual shift in government towards faith in the rational incentives of the market to instil responsible behavioural patterns in the British public.

Reflecting on Conservatives' conceptions of public attitudes can shed new light on the 'tensions' in Thatcherite individualism discerned by Davies, Freeman and Pemberton. While uncertainty as to whether individuals could be trusted to behave responsibly with their savings could certainly have been related to contradictions within the 'diverse tapestry of post-war neoliberalism', it would be misleading to portray policymaking as purely a product of theoretical divination.[163] Until the mid-1980s at least, debate within the Conservative Party concentrated on the practical matter of how to overcome collectivist structures and attitudes within British society, rather than how to implement a neo-liberal agenda in a positive sense. As Davies and Richard Vinen have argued, rather than portraying 'Thatcherism' as a coherent ideological project, historians should relate ideas and the formulation of policy to the changing political and economic circumstances of the

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[160] Ibid., pp.18-19.

[161] Policy Group on the Promotion of Enterprise Report, 'Everyman a Capitalist', April 1983, CPA, CRD 4/4/44.

[162] Aled Davies, James Freeman and Hugh Pemberton, '"Everyman a Capitalist" or "Free to Choose"? Exploring the Tensions Within Thatcherite Individualism', *Historical Journal* 61 (2018), pp.477-501.

[163] Ibid., p.477.

period.[164] The frustration of the Stepping Stones project was, as we have seen, paralleled by a growing scepticism regarding the malleability of public attitudes through top-down rhetorical exhortation. While Hoskyns and Strauss had envisaged themselves as being engaged in a struggle to reverse the trend towards socialism, by the end of Thatcher's first administration it seemed that an altogether different socio-economic trend was much harder to overcome. Economic and social disaggregation, almost certainly expedited by the government's economic policies, seemed to counteract their attempts at moralization. It was this realization that precipitated the transition in the government's approach away from what Middlemas termed a 'declaratory regime' and towards 'managerial praxis'.[165] Rather than attempting to 'reverse the trend', as Joseph had once described the New Right's project,[166] Thatcher's second administration attempted to achieve moral and cultural change by working with the grain of social and economic change. As we shall see, this reappraisal was accompanied and underpinned by an alternative conception of the relationship between economic change and the transformation of public attitudes.

4.3 Micropolitics

The 'New Beginning' promised in the Conservative Party's 1979 manifesto was pronounced in revivalist terms. 'Most people', it concluded, 'want to be told the truth and be given a clear lead towards the action needed for recovery'.[167] Although it pledged to circumscribe the reach of the state into the life of the individual, the manifesto retained a paternalistic tone, envisaging the government as a moral exemplar and pedagogue for the British people, who were spoken of in collective terms. By 1987, however, the Conservatives had adopted a rather different rhetoric.

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[164] Davies, 'Pension Funds', pp.105-06; Richard Vinen, 'A War of Position? The Thatcher Government's Preparation for the 1984 Miners' Strike', *English Historical Review* 134 (2019), pp.121-50, at p.124; Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, pp.4-5.

[165] Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 3*, p.277.

[166] Keith Joseph, *Reversing the Trend: A Critical Re-appraisal of Conservative Economic and Social Policies: Seven Speeches* (Chichester: Barry Rose, 1975).

[167] Conservative Party General Election Manifesto 1979, in Iain Dale (ed.), *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos, 1900-1997* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.265-82, at p.282.

Whereas the 1979 manifesto had promised a *reversal* of decline and a *restoration* of responsible values, the 1987 manifesto pointed to the future, adumbrating 'The Next Moves Forward'. 'Our goal', it declared, 'is a capital-owning democracy of people and families who exercise power over their own lives in the most direct way.'[168] Although the 1979 manifesto had included pledges to increase home ownership and employee share-ownership,[169] arguments regarding the implications of capital ownership for individual autonomy and self-determination only emerged later in the following decade. Of course, the more radical and optimistic tone of the latter manifesto reflected the contrasting tactical considerations of a party in opposition and one seeking re-election following two terms of government. Nevertheless, it is hard to deny that a significant philosophical adjustment took place between the two elections. By 1987, the decisions of individuals, rather than the leadership of their government, were regarded as the primary agents of moralization, inculcating an entrepreneurial culture.

This marked a move away from idealist philosophy and towards what might be termed neo-liberalism, which envisaged individuals as rational economic actors rather than receptacles of a collective consciousness. In Foucauldian terms, the Thatcher governments sought to establish 'technologies of the self', whereby individuals, in making rational economic choices, adopted 'responsible', self-reliant behavioural patterns. The role of government in this schema was to ensure that the individual's 'responsible' choice correlated with his or her rational-economic choice, rather than persuading them to alter their behaviour through exhortation.[170] Sutcliffe-Braithwaite has outlined how Conservatives were able to reconcile these neo-liberal ideas with moral traditionalism, arguing that individual responsibility would foster

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[168] Conservative Party General Election Manifesto 1987, in Iain Dale (ed.), *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos, 1900*-1997 (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.313-51, at p.316.
[169] Conservative Manifesto 1979, pp.271, 277.
[170] Thomas Lemke, '"The Birth of Bio-Politics": Michel Foucault's Lecture at the Collège de France on Neo-Liberal Governmentality', *Economy and Society,* 30 (2001), pp.190-207, at pp.200-01.

the bourgeois virtues of thrift and industriousness.[171] Although Sutcliffe-Braithwaite is correct to say that the Thatcher governments 'plunder[ed] neo-liberalism when it suited them', her description of 'Thatcherism' as a 'coherent and consistent ideology' understates the extent to which the increased adoption of neo-liberal policies by the mid-1980s was a belated change of course from earlier approaches. Indeed, neo-liberalism reflected not simply an evolution of a unitary 'Thatcherite' ideology, but a negation of many of the philosophical principles and conceptions of social change that had guided members of the New Right over the previous decade.[172] Although ideological, the British New Right was certainly not consistent. For David Howell, the government's 'all out assault on the "micro" side' after 1983 reflected a belated recognition of the failure of their earlier approach.[173] No longer were the New Right engaged primarily in a 'battle of ideas'. Now, paradoxically, the Thatcher government was drawn into more direct intervention in order to roll back the frontiers of the state and transform behavioural patterns. Once more, it was deemed a time for action, not words.

In fact, in the implementation of neo-liberal microeconomic reforms, public opinion was no longer deemed such a constraint. Rather, it was assumed that, by adjusting material incentives, public opinion would automatically follow. Nigel Lawson stated this philosophy explicitly in his memoirs:

In advance of every significant privatisation, public opinion was invariably hostile to the idea, and there was no way it could be won round except by the Government going ahead and doing it…[W]hile in an ideal world a Government would always persuade the people of the wisdom of a policy before implementing it, in practice

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[171] Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Neo-Liberalism and Morality in the Making of Thatcherite Social Policy', *Historical Journal* 55 (2012), pp.497-520.
[172] Ibid, pp. 498, 520.
[173] Howell, *Blind Victory*, pp.156, 170.

that is often not possible, and becomes simply a recipe for inaction.[174]

The implication of this statement is that Lawson considered the distribution of material benefits to be a more effective means of transforming public opinion than the dissemination and exchange of ideas with the public. As we have seen, Lawson had long been sceptical of attempts to persuade the public of the need for radical economic reforms, instead advocating an almost Machiavellian strategy of 'divide and rule'. Vinen's study of the government's preparations for a potential miners' strike reveals how Lawson put this approach into action as Secretary of State for Energy between 1981 and 1983. Rather than adopting the Stepping Stones strategy of launching a great debate with the public about the role of trade unions in British society, Lawson made only anodyne public statements. Instead, he sought to defuse the power of the NUM from within, making concessions to the moderate president, Joe Gormley, in order to stave off the threat of Arthur Scargill's militant wing.[175] Moreover, Lawson identified the 'political geography' of the federal NUM, seeking to play regional organizations off against each other.[176] Diverging rates of regional productivity would, in Lawson's mind, result in divergent economic, and hence political, interests amongst Constituent Associations. He therefore encouraged investment in the 'centres of moderation' of the East Midlands coalfields.[177] This pragmatic approach, identifying and manipulating material interest groups, marked in many ways a return to a liberal pluralist outlook and away from the idealist approach, which had sought to transcend bargaining processes between interest groups.

This materialist turn was, of course, a response to contingent political circumstances; nevertheless, it is possible to trace the intellectual influences that

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[174] Lawson, *Memoirs*, pp.118-19.

[175] Vinen, 'A War of Position?', pp.16, 19. Lawson even recommended Gormley for a peerage following a retirement in March 1982.

[176] Ibid., pp.19-20. See also David Howell, 'Defiant Dominoes: Working Miners and the 1984-5 strike', in Jackson and Saunders (eds), *Making Thatcher's Britain*, pp.148-64.

[177] Nigel Lawson letter to Ian Gow (Vale of Belvoir), 27 January 1982, MTFW (122730).

guided and reinforced it. Lawson took inspiration from and regularly exchanged ideas with his old friend and former colleague at the *Financial Times*, Samuel Brittan.[178] Although by no means a Conservative himself, the influence of Brittan's economic thinking on the New Right has been widely recognized.[179] In addition to his journalism, Brittan contributed to the IEA's efforts to translate contemporary American economics and political science to a British context, personally briefing Thatcher and her shadow ministers in opposition.[180] Lawson went as far as to claim that Brittan 'contribut[ed] more to our understanding than at least 90 per cent of academic economists'.[181] Yet, in many respects, his influence acted as a philosophical counterweight to the anti-materialism of the CPS, steering the Conservatives towards liberal pluralism. Following Joseph Schumpeter, Brittan argued that the country's economic problems could be attributed to endemic flaws in the democratic system, rather than any abstract cultural pathology. Indeed, he was scornful towards 'philosophic conservatives', who believed that a religious or political elite could or should dictate popular preferences.[182] The endemic problem of the pursuit of group self-interest in the marketplace was, from Brittan's theoretical perspective, the logical outcome of individuals pursuing their rational self-interest within the current political system.[183] Like the CRD under Heath, Brittan interpreted voter behaviour in instrumental terms, invoking the 'Michigan School' of political

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[178] Lawson, *Memoirs*, p.168.

[179] Jackson, 'Think-Tank Archipelago', pp.54-55; Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, pp.86-87; Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 3*, p.199; Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p.325; Roger Middleton, 'Brittan on Britain: Decline, Declinism, and the "Traumas of the 1970s"', in Lawrence Black, Hugh Pemberton and Pat Thane (eds), *Reassessing 1970s Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp.69-95.

[180] Middleton, 'Brittan on Britain', p.74.

[181] Nigel Lawson, quoted in ibid., p.73.

[182] Samuel Brittan, *The Economic Consequences of Democracy* (2nd edn, Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1988), p.274.

[183] Ibid., pp.248-50. He drew many of his ideas from Joseph Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1942).

science to demonstrate the ignorance of voters to policy debate.[184] In fact, he refused to believe that the rationalistic and materialistic contemporary world could be influenced through any sort of mythology or 'public doctrine'. Myths, he argued, 'cannot hope to serve a social purpose if people know that they are myths and seek to preserve them in a utilitarian spirit'.[185] The disenchantment of society could not be reversed. Rather than imagining 'some grand Hegelian collective consciousness' that could overcome sectional interest groups, Brittan sought solutions to the country's economic difficulties that worked with the grain of individual self-interest, recognizing, rather than attempting to efface, the diversity of interests within British society.[186]

In the 1970s, Brittan's focus was on the largely negative objective of restraining the power of the government to propitiate minority interest groups. To this end, he advocated electoral reform and constitutional restraints on the power of government, including a powerful bureaucracy.[187] One might view the rigid monetary discipline of the MTFS as an embodiment of this approach, restraining the capacity of the central government to give way to popular demands, rather than attempting to alter the public demands in themselves. However, partly in light of the experience of Thatcher's first administration, Brittan followed a similar intellectual trajectory to that of David Howell (whom he influenced). By the summer of 1983, Brittan had concluded that 'the entrenched position of industrial, economic and political interest groups will limit what can be achieved by any form of economic management, new or old'.[188] Whereas he had once regarded bureaucracy as an essential restraint upon irresponsible politicians, the government's failure to control

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[184] Brittan, *Economic Consequences of Democracy*, p.250. Brittan cited Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960), as well as Butler and Stokes' *Political Change in Britain*.
[185] Ibid., p.274.
[186] Samuel Brittan, *The Role and Limits of Government: Essays in Political Economy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p.30.
[187] Brittan, *Economic Consequences of Democracy*, pp.263, 308-13.
[188] Brittan, *Role and Limits of Government*, pp.262-63.

£M3 through monetary targets and concurrent failure to reduce the PSBR by attempting to impose market principles on the nationalized industries, helped to convince Brittan that the public sector, not just the democratic process, was inherently flawed.[189] In many respects, Brittan was simply following through the implications of a model of political behaviour based upon rational-economic action by applying it to the public sector. This 'economics of politics', which advanced a theoretical explanation for the self-perpetuation of bureaucracies and their concomitant insulation from public preferences, had been developed since the 1960s by the 'Virginia School' of 'public choice' theorists, who included James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock.[190] Although Brittan had drawn upon elements of public choice theory in the 1970s, he acknowledged that it had not, at that time, been central to his critique of state intervention.[191] This would, however, change during the 1980s, as his attention turned towards microeconomic reforms.

Part of the increased allure of public choice theory was its capacity to explain the difficulties the Thatcher government was experiencing in its attempts to reform the public sector and overcome the corporate resistance of trade unions and local government. Given that public sector employees were, just like those in the private sector, utility-maximizers (to employ public choice jargon), they would always seek to preserve and extend the functions of their organization. Imposing cash limits without exposure to the disciplines and incentives of the free market would logically, according to this theory, result in a lower quality of service without any

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[189] Ibid., pp.242-52.

[190] See Noel Thompson, 'Hollowing Out the State: Public Choice Theory and the Critique of Keynesian Social Democracy', *Contemporary British History*, 22 (2008), pp.355-82. Seminal works in the development of public choice theory include Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957); James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965); Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965) and William A. Niskanen Jr., *Bureaucracy and Representative Government* (Chicago: Aldine, Atherton, 1971).

[191] Samuel Brittan, *A Restatement of Economic Liberalism* (2nd ed., Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), pp.227-28.

commensurate reduction in overstaffing or inefficiency.[192] Ratecapping of local government in the early 1980s, for example, seemed to have inspired only disobedience and prominent defensive campaigns, such as the GLC's 'Fare's Fair' campaign.[193] Such organized minorities would always, according to public choice theory, possess more political weight than the passive majority. Samuel Brittan concluded that, rather than attempting to defeat sectional interest groups or to convince them to abandon their privileges, the government would have to recognize that those privileges were now, rightly or wrongly, de facto property rights.[194] If human nature were conceived of as inherently self-interested and motivated by material gain, then the government would have no choice but to work with the grain of existing interests, rather than engaging in a futile attempt to overcome them. Hence, if special privileges were to be withdrawn then the beneficiaries would have to be compensated accordingly. In more philosophical terms, Brittan presented this as a revised social contract theory, drawing on the ideas of James Buchanan. Instead of treating the social order as a *tabula rasa* (in the manner of John Rawls's 'veil of ignorance' theory), Buchanan argued that the social contract must respect existing imbalances of power. This did not, however, entail an intransigent defence of the status quo. To the contrary, Buchanan argued that, to maintain a consensus in support of the wider social order, the division of property must be periodically revised in order to reflect changes in the balance of power in society.[195] Such a theory provided a route through which the government could simultaneously dismantle parts of the public sector leviathan while at the same time establishing new or larger interest groups with a vested interest in the efficient functioning of the free market.

Although public choice theory was not necessarily the ultimate source of the Thatcher government's microeconomic turn towards privatization and popular

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[192] Madsen Pirie, *The Logic of Economics and its Implications for the Public Sector* (London: Adam Smith Institute, 1982), pp.29-31.

[193] Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 3*, p.309.

[194] Brittan, *Restatement of Economic Liberalism*, pp.263-64.

[195] Ibid., 226-227. See James M. Buchanan, *The Limits of Liberty: Between Anarchy and Leviathan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

capital ownership, it nonetheless provided reinforcement for the direction in which the government was already headed. As we have seen, efforts to widen share ownership by no means constituted the implementation of an ideological blueprint divined from neo-liberal theory, emerging as they did from debates regarding industrial relations and codetermination. The desire to roll back the state was not a 'Thatcherite' innovation. Indeed, Ewen Green sought to demonstrate that the privatization programme of the 1980s 'had its roots deep in the Conservative Party's subculture', arguing that the party had been consistently antipathetic towards state ownership of industry. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that the 'political dynamics' of privatization *were* in fact a product of the 1980s.[196] Prior to the mid-1980s, denationalization (as it was largely termed prior to 1981[197]) was considered primarily as a means of achieving economic objectives. It was only later that the policy fully developed into a much wider project of socio-political change, seeking to create a 'popular capitalism'.[198] During his period as Chancellor, Geoffrey Howe had considered the sale of state assets to be an important means of reducing the PSBR, which, especially in light of the frustration of efforts to control £M3, could also serve as an indirect means of reducing inflationary pressures.[199] Privatization, as a project to widen capital ownership, was 'not on the Policy Unit agenda' during the first term, according to Hoskyns.[200] Although, as we have seen, discussions were certainly taking place within the Conservative Party during the 1970s regarding the desirability of wider share ownership, such policies were not yet considered as *the* central means of engineering social and political change.

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[196] E. H. H. Green, *Thatcher* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), pp.100-01.

[197] Green suggested that Thatcher first used the term 'privatization' in Parliament in July 1981. Ibid., p.98.

[198] Margaret Thatcher, Speech to Conservative Party Conference, Bournemouth, 10 October 1986, MTFW (106498). Lawson later told Charles Moore that Thatcher was 'distinctly unenthusiastic about privatisation' during her first term and 'went along with it initially entirely because of the money it could raise'. Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, p.36.

[199] Richard Stevens, 'The Evolution of Privatisation as an Electoral Policy, c.1970-90', *Contemporary British History*, 18 (2004), pp.47-75, at pp.55-56.

[200] Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p.287.

Indeed, public opinion was often feared to be an obstacle to denationalization, which would have to proceed, according to the Policy Group on Nationalised Industries, 'more or less by stealth'.[201] Selling public industries to the private sector was feared to carry unpatriotic connotations, privileging the interests of plutocrats over those of the public.[202] Lawson has claimed that the limited progress towards privatization during Thatcher's first administration reflected the prime minister's fear of frightening floating voters.[203] Although Lawson was no doubt attempting to draw a flattering comparison between his own apparent political perspicacity and Thatcher's lack of boldness, there is a degree of truth in the claim that it took several years for the government to fully appreciate the potential public popularity of what came to be known as 'privatization'. The sale of Amersham International, a small radiopharmaceutical company, in 1982 has been pinpointed as a seminal moment.[204] Having decided upon a fixed-price public flotation, the government were surprised when shares were twenty-four times oversubscribed and were sold on at a large premium. Although this apparent undervaluation was embarrassing to Lawson, the Energy Secretary, he has suggested that, in retrospect, it was of long-term benefit to the government.[205] Not only did it reveal that the potential demand for shares was larger than they had anticipated, the publicity could have also helped to disseminate the idea that profits could be made from such investments. Scepticism that the market would be large enough to float large tranches of shares in the large public utilities was subsequently overcome as the Thatcher's second administration floated fifty-one percent of British Telecom (BT) in November 1984. Although the decision to sell BT to individual small investors was motivated by a desire to find a source of capital large enough to avoid selling to

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[201] Final Report of the Nationalised Industries Policy Group, 8 July 1977, DHP, HWLL 2/4/1/9. See also Green, *Thatcher*, pp.93-94.

[202] Green, *Thatcher*, p.88.

[203] Lawson, *Memoirs*, p.117; Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, pp.33-34.

[204] Green, *Thatcher*, pp.97-98; Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, p.35.

[205] Green, *Thatcher*, p.127.

foreign investors,[206] it nonetheless marked the point when privatization evolved from a means of raising Treasury revenues and industrial efficiency into a broader socio-political project to create a 'popular capitalism'.[207]

The reshuffle of ministers and advisors following the 1983 general election placed the privatization programme in the hands of men who considered it to be a wider project to stimulate socio-political change. Lawson's promotion to Chancellor of the Exchequer was accompanied by the appointment of John Moore as a junior minister at the Treasury.[208] Moore, who as a junior minister at the Department for Energy had overseen the Amersham flotation, was now charged with directing the privatization programme. He worked closely with the new director of the Policy Unit, John Redwood, who considered himself Thatcher's 'guru on privatization'.[209] In a speech to the National Association of Pension Funds in May 1986, Moore spoke in elevated terms about a grand project to establish 'popular capitalism' in Britain. While expressing his admiration for the pension funds, whom he insisted did an 'excellent job', he nonetheless professed his desire to ensure that 'millions of ordinary people' could enter the market in a more direct sense.[210] Moore's desire for individualized capital ownership derived not simply from economic criteria but also from a conviction that it would engender a change in social and political mores. This was because, he explained, personal ownership is the 'great teacher'. 'When people have to make their own hard choices on how to allocate their own resources to meet their own demands', Moore argued, 'their understanding of [economic] truth is

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[206] Letwin, *Anatomy of Thatcherism*, pp.102-03; Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, pp.196-97.

[207] Following the British Telecom flotation, Lawson employed the term 'people's capitalism'. Thatcher, however, believing that the phrase sounded communist, preferred the formulation 'popular capitalism'. Ibid., p.140.

[208] Moore initially served as Economic Secretary to the Treasury for four months before moving to Financial Secretary to the Treasury in October 1983. Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, p.190n.

[209] John Redwood, quoted in Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, p.189-90. Redwood's previous employer, the investment bank NM Rothschild, were heavily involved in the Thatcher governments' privatization programme. Richard Heffernan, '"Blueprint for a Revolution"? The Politics of the Adam Smith Institute', *Contemporary British History*, 10 (1996), pp.73-87, at p.84.

[210] John Moore, *The Value of Ownership* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1986), p.6.

greatly deepened'.[211] Whereas New Right thinkers had once argued that altering perceptions of economic interest was more important than satiating material desires,[212] now that logic had been reversed. According to Moore's philosophy, exposure to the imperatives of the market would produce a nation of rational-economic actors whose behaviour could be expected to adjust automatically. Political culture was not autonomous from, but determined by, economic reality.

A prosopography of the new generation of Conservative MPs, who were increasingly influential by the middle of the decade, can give an indication of how the intellectual influences on the party evolved. In general terms, a generation whose formative experience was the reaction against Heathite technocracy and materialistic politics was succeeded by a new generation inspired more by libertarian and neo-liberal ideas emerging primarily from the United States. Whereas, for the former group, the free market policies of institutes like the IEA were means to the end of the restoration of what they imagined to be a traditional political culture, characterized by the 'vigorous virtues', the latter were more committed to freedom as a positive end in itself. Thatcher's decision to abolish the CPRS following the 1983 general election, coupled with the CPS's increasing focus on international affairs under Hugh Thomas's leadership, arguably left a vacuum into which these new 'trail-blazers' could manoeuvre.[213]

In 1985, a group of like-minded young MPs, who had been meeting regularly since the last election, decided to publish a pamphlet to promote what they saw as the radical agenda of the Thatcher government. Calling their pamphlet *No Turning Back*, they presented themselves as keepers of the Thatcherite flame, deliberately evoking the prime minister's pledge at the 1980 party conference not to commit a U-turn.[214]

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[211] Ibid., p.3.

[212] See, for example, Shirley Robin Letwin, 'On Conservative Individualism', in Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays*, p.58.

[213] Madsen Pirie, *Think Tank: The Story of the Adam Smith Institute* (London: Biteback, 2012), p.104.

[214] Michael Brown and Conservative Political Centre, *No Turning Back*: *A New Agenda from a Group of Conservative MPs* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1985). The MPs who put their name to the pamphlet were: Michael Brown, Christopher Chope, Michael Fallon, Michael Forsyth, Neil

Yet again, the language of resolution and the mythology of the U-turn were appropriated in an effort to influence and constrain the government's actions. However, the group's rhetoric of continuity obscured the fact that they, in many respects, advocated a radical break from the past, disparaging the desire of other members of their party to preserve the status quo. They promised a formula for 'modernization', which would breathe fresh air into 'tired institutions' and allow individuals 'the freedom to change traditional manners of behaviour'.[215] In valorizing freedom of choice over the upholding of traditional values, the No Turning Back Group (NTBG), as they became known, consciously sought to move the party in a libertarian direction. Indeed, they acknowledged that this might offend 'the sour mind of the [Conservative] ideologue who wants everyone to live according to his values'.[216] Although the group maintained that, in conserving the spontaneity of the market order, they were upholding the Conservative tradition, they made no attempt to reason that the free market would uphold traditional values.[217] Indeed, contrary to the vision of Conservatism espoused by Alfred Sherman, which sought to propagate and venerate shared values, these younger MPs were prepared to tolerate and even celebrate moral and cultural pluralism.

The policy proposals in the NTBG's manifesto bear the clear imprint of public choice theory, seeking to overcome producer capture and extend the perceived benefits of consumer choice. This is no surprise given that the ghost author of their pamphlet was Madsen Pirie of the Adam Smith Institute (ASI).[218] Like the CPS, the *raison d'être* of the ASI was less to conduct original research than to act as a political advocate. However, whereas the pre-eminent concern of the CPS was to transform the climate of public opinion, the ASI was less directly concerned with

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Hamilton, Gerald Howarth, Robert Jones, Edward Leigh, Peter Lilley, Francis Maude, Michael Portillo, Angela Rumbold and Ian Twinn.

[215] Ibid., pp.3-5.

[216] Ibid., p.7.

[217] Ibid., p.38.

[218] Pirie, *Think Tank*, pp.111-12. Pirie claims that Michael Forsyth asked him to compile the group's ideas into a single paper, for which he was paid £1000.

mass publicity. Richard Heffernan has compared its *modus operandi* to that of Greenpeace given that it concentrated on advocating to decision makers in central and local government on behalf of specific policies.[219] This 'policy engineering' model imitated think tanks in the United States, such as the Brookings Institution. In fact, the ASI was closely linked to the Heritage Foundation, a Washington think tank that aimed to promote ideas emerging from the Virginia School of public choice theory. Pirie, along with Eamonn and Stuart Butler, had worked, following their graduation from St Andrews, for the founder of the Heritage Foundation, Edwin J. Feulner, when he was executive director of the Republican Study Committee during the 1970s.[220] Stuart Butler went on to be a senior official at the Foundation.[221] In promoting public choice policies to Whitehall, the ASI added weight to the Conservative Party's turn away from holistic thinking. Their 'micropolitical' approach sought to gradually erode the position of vested interest groups and establish new counterbalancing political constituencies by working with the grain of individual self-interest, rather than attempting a wholesale conversion of the public mindset or demanding altruistic self-sacrifice.[222]

Indeed, Pirie explicitly renounced the 'battle of ideas' outlook that had inspired the New Right over the previous decade. In his mind, altering the consensus of academic or public opinion was insufficient to guarantee political change given the reactionary power of material interest groups. In a 1982 publication, revealingly titled *The Logic of Economics*, Pirie insisted that the political sphere could not be treated as a *tabula rasa*, in which public opinion was infinitely malleable. The tribulations and conflicts of the early Thatcher years had ensured, according to Pirie, that there was 'more caution today concerning the degree to which human nature can

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[219] Heffernan, '"Blueprint for a Revolution"?', p.79.

[220] Pirie, *Think Tank*, p.36; Heffernan, '"Blueprint for a Revolution"?', p.76-77; Andrew Denham and Mark Garnett, *British Think-Tanks and the Climate of Opinion* (London: UCL Press, 1998), p.160; Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, pp.281-82.

[221] Heffernan, '"Blueprint for a Revolution"?', p.77; Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p.282.

[222] Madsen Pirie, *Micropolitics* (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1988), p.129.

be changed by ideas'.[223] From a public choice perspective, which conceived individuals as inherently rational and self-interested actors, human behaviour could not be altered without reconfiguring the framework of material incentives within which individuals and groups operated.[224] The extent to which this outlook represented a radical challenge to the earlier outlook of the New Right is reflected in Pirie's interpretation of the failure of the Heath government. As we have seen, the New Right coalesced around a critique of the Heathite 'politics of technique' and its inability to escape the constraints of the prevailing climate of opinion. Pirie's interpretation was near enough the antithesis of this reading. For him, the Heath government's failure was the result of a *neglect* of technique. The government's election victory in 1970, according to Pirie, proved the existence of public support for the radical policies of Selsdon; however, the government's want of precise techniques to implement the reforms necessitated the infamous 'U-turns'.[225] While this interpretation was tendentious on many levels, exaggerating the economic liberalism of the 1970 platform and overlooking Heath's undoubted concern for 'technique',[226] it served Pirie's argument that the Thatcher government should adopt the ready-made microeconomic policies advocated by the ASI.

The ASI's approach entirely repudiated the Stepping Stones philosophy of government in which legislative change was preceded by public debate. This outlook derived not only from scepticism regarding the political potency of ideas and language, but also from the certainty that public support for reforms would arise naturally following their implementation as the benefits were felt. Pirie wrote, in 1988, that it was 'easier to change the attitudes after the policies have changed, rather than before'.[227] Most theories, he claimed, were merely *post hoc* rationalizations of

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[223] Pirie, *Logic of Economics*, p.7.

[224] Ibid., pp.20, 33-34, 61, 89.

[225] Ibid., pp.77-79; Pirie, *Micropolitics*, pp.38-50; Denham and Garnett, *British Think-Tanks,* pp.162-63.

[226] See Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and Its Holders since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp.331-56.

[227] Pirie, *Micropolitics*, p.226.

existing political realities. Plato, for example, rationalized the state of Sparta, and John Locke the Glorious Revolution of 1688.[228] Thus, it would be entirely natural, and indeed desirable, for the Thatcher government to take action prior to theorizing. Following public choice theory, the best means to challenge entrenched interest groups was not to confront them head-on, but to establish new interest groups with a countervailing 'market situation'.[229] The government had experienced how granting council tenants the right to buy their houses at a discounted rate had eroded the potency of council resistance. According to public choice theory, the encouragement of private alternatives to public sector provision would erode public sector monopolies by stealth as consumers would naturally exercise their choice in favour of private sector providers which, given their exposure to the imperatives of the market, would be more sensitive to public demands. Not only would this weaken demand for the public sector, it would also establish a new 'beneficiary class', determined to defend private sector provision from collectivist authorities.[230] In adopting this 'micro-incrementalist' strategy, the government would continue to be proactive in creating and reshaping political constituencies; yet, now it would be working with the grain of individual self-interest rather than attempting to overcome habitual patterns of behaviour.[231]

It is extremely difficult to determine the extent to which the ASI exerted influence over the Thatcher government. The ASI's 'Insider Bulletin' certainly made grand claims that its 'Omega File' policymaking project inspired action in Whitehall.[232] By 1990, they claimed that more than 100 of the institute's ideas had become public policy.[233] Moreover, several of those who had written for the institute

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[228] Ibid., pp.22-23.
[229] Ibid., 124.
[230] Pirie, *Logic of Economics*, pp.38, 40.
[231] Pirie, *Micropolitics*, p.208.
[232] Adam Smith Institute, *Insider Bulletin*, 9 (London: Adam Smith Institute, 1984). The Omega File was modeled on the Heritage Foundation's 'Mandate for Leadership'.
[233] Denham and Garnett, *British Think-Tanks,* p.164.

were elected as MPs in 1983.[234] Peter Self went so far as to claim that 'The *Mein Kampf* of Thatcherism is surely the book *Micropolitics* by Madsen Pirie'.[235] However, as Heffernan has noted, these claims to have pulled the strings of government behind the scenes are not borne out in the memoirs of ministers, which uniformly fail to mention the ASI.[236] While this could, of course, reflect the reluctance of politicians to apportion credit beyond their immediate circle, it seems clear that the ASI's contribution was to reinforce the government's movement in a direction in which it was already headed independently. Nevertheless, even if the ASI cannot claim to have had a revolutionary influence on government policy, it did serve as another channel through which public choice ideas entered the mental horizons of policymakers.

Michael Forsyth's pamphlet, *Re-servicing Britain*, published by the ASI in 1980, is probably the most notable example of the institute generating a clearly traceable influence on policymakers. Citing the theories of Gordon Tullock, as well as the practical policy proposals of the Urban Institute and Local Government Centre in the United States, Forsyth advocated putting local council services, such as refuse collection, out to tender.[237] This represented a pragmatic alternative to pure privatization. Even though, from a public choice perspective, purely privately financed services would be more flexible and efficient, full privatization was considered less politically feasible. Whereas full privatization would arouse fervent opposition among employees and consumers of public sector services, publicly funded private provision would be a less perceptible change, avoiding direct user-charges while still introducing the benefits of competition.[238] This micropolitical

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[234] The MPs newly-elected in 1983, who had written for the ASI, were Michael Forsyth, Michael Fallon, Robert Jones and Philip Holland. James Pawsey was re-elected. See Adam Smith Institute, *Insider Bulletin*, 8 (London: Adam Smith Institute, 1983).

[235] Peter Self, 'What's Wrong With Government? The Problem of Public Choice', *Political Quarterly*, 61 (1990), pp.23-35, at p.25.

[236] Heffernan, '"Blueprint for a Revolution"?', p.83.

[237] Michael Forsyth, *Re-Servicing Britain* (London: Adam Smith Institute, 1980). Forsyth was serving on Westminster City Council at the time of publication.

[238] Pirie, *Logic of Economics*, pp.83-85.

approach found a way to work around unfavourable public attitudes, rather than attempting to overcome them directly. Forsyth encouraged the government and local authorities not to worry about winning the intellectual argument with opponents of the policies. He insisted:

The best method is just to do it, to put out services for private contract. The arguments of theory against the success of such action melt away in the practical results wherever it is done.[239]

Although Forsyth's paper did not generate a great deal of publicity, it did nonetheless attract the attention of Downing Street. Perhaps assisted by the ASI's association with Sir James Goldsmith's *NOW!* Magazine,[240] the pamphlet attracted the attention of the Policy Unit, which ordered 20,000 copies to be circulated to Conservative local authorities.[241] This low-key influence, advocating on behalf of particular policies, reflected the trend for the think tanks in Britain to move away from the model of the CPRS and CPS - which had been focused on holistic, long-term strategy - and towards the American model of advocacy institutes.[242] In general terms, American think tanks aspired to a philosophy of 'rationality', 'logic', 'evidence' and 'expertise'.[243] Such an empirical, rational approach was a clear change of emphasis from the British New Right's earlier preoccupation with abstract, superstructural questions of language, values and culture.

One might argue that, under the influence of figures like Samuel Brittan and groups like the ASI, Thatcher's government was fully converted to a neo-liberal philosophy. No longer did ministers think in terms of a collective national consciousness; instead, in formulating their microeconomic policies, they adopted a

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[239] Forsyth, *Re-Servicing Britain*.
[240] Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p.285.
[241] Heffernan, '"Blueprint for a Revolution"?', p.83; Denham and Garnett, *British Think-Tanks,* p.164; Pirie, *Think Tank*, pp.56-57.
[242] Denham and Garnett, *British Think-Tanks,* pp.172-73.
[243] Ibid., pp.6-7.

methodological individualism, balancing the diverse interests of rational utility-maximizing actors in the marketplace. Brittan described this philosophy as 'choice utilitarianism', which sought to achieve the greatest satisfaction for the greatest number according to their 'revealed preference' in the marketplace.[244] Many of the Conservatives who wrote for the *Salisbury Review* would no doubt consider this consequentialist philosophy abhorrent, holding a fervent belief in absolute moral values. Their lives' work was dedicated to opposing utilitarian, reformist government. By the mid-1980s, however, one might contend that the government's moral traditionalism was counteracted by its economic liberalism. Implicit in the acceptance of individual revealed preference was a tolerance of alternative values and lifestyles. Albert Weale has gone so far as to argue that free market capitalism possesses an inherent tendency to undermine social conformity as entrepreneurs, in search of new profitable niches, promote alternative patterns of consumption.[245] For Brittan, the social and cultural freedoms afforded by the expansion of market activity were an unequivocally good thing, as was the internationalization of the world economy.[246] However, to suggest that Thatcher's Conservative governments fully shared this outlook would be manifestly implausible.

Brittan's critiques of the Thatcher governments underline the fact that Thatcher's government was not suddenly converted wholesale to liberalism. As Sutcliffe-Braithwaite has described, economic liberalism was valued by the government more for the discipline it demanded on the part of individuals than for the social freedoms it proffered.[247] Although the rhetoric of younger Conservative MPs, such as those in the NTBG, was more inclined to extol freedom of choice as a

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[244] Brittan, *Role and Limits of Government*, p.34.

[245] Albert Weale, 'Can Homo Economicus Have a Political Theory?', *Political Studies*, 38 (1990), pp.517-25, at p.519.

[246] Brittan, *Restatement of Economic Liberalism*, p.310; Middleton, 'Brittan on Britain', p.75.

[247] Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Neo-Liberalism and Morality'; Brittan, *Restatement of Economic Liberalism*, p.241.

good in itself (or at least a growing public demand to be accommodated),[248] it would be overdrawn to suggest that the Thatcher government as a whole ever embraced individual self-realization in the manner that New Labour was to a decade later.[249] To the contrary, in spite of their promotion of free choice in the economic sphere, Brittan felt that the government remained wedded to a 'petty authoritarianism and a highly illiberal rhetoric on social and economic issues'.[250] He described the government's philosophy, which viewed the free market as a means of imposing thrift and self-discipline, as the 'New Spartanism'.[251] In Brittan's mind, the fact that market freedom was merely a means to an end for the government was laid bare by their lack of compunction in infringing free market principles. Thatcher's support for mortgage interest-relief, a subsidy for middle-class property ownership that inflated property prices, was the most egregious example in Brittan's mind.[252] Ultimately, it seemed to him that Thatcher herself remained wedded to moralization, attempting to mould public opinion and behaviour in her desired direction, even if her governments' promotion of individual freedom of choice in fact served only to diversify British culture.

Yet, if Thatcher remained wedded to public moralization, the means by which her government sought to accomplish it had changed substantially by the end of the decade. After her third successive election victory, Thatcher returned to some of the moral and religious themes that had become less prominent in her speeches,

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[248] See for example, Peter Lilley, *Thatcherism – The Next Generation* (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 1989). Lilley welcomed the 'profound social and educational change' that resulted in a public more accustomed to making decisions about their own lives (p.15).

[249] Emily Robinson, *The Language of Progressive Politics in Modern Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), chapter 6.

[250] Brittan, *Restatement of Economic Liberalism*, p.310.

[251] Ibid., p.241.

[252] Ibid., p.255. Nigel Lawson refrained from abolishing MIRAS (mortgage interest-relief at source). Although, in the 1988 Budget, he restricted the maximum value to a loan of £30,000 per residence (rather than per borrower), prohibiting unmarried couples from pooling their allowances. See Lawson, *Memoirs*, pp.494-5. MIRAS was eventually abolished by Gordon Brown in 2000.

especially following Sherman's departure.[253] If one compares the theological pronouncements in her address to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (the so-called 'Sermon on the Mound') of May 1988 with those in her two earlier speeches at St Lawrence Jewry in 1978 and 1982, one can clearly discern a shift to a more individualistic conception of morality. In 1988, she argued that the defining feature of Christianity was the individual's 'right to choose between good and evil', emphasizing Christ's *choice* to lay down His life so that our sins may be forgiven.[254] Thatcher's stress on individual choice is often traced to her upbringing in the Methodist Church.[255] Yet, while Thatcher might have always retained evangelical tendencies, her earlier addresses were much more inclined to stress the corporate aspect of spiritual and moral life and the role of the Established Church as an agent of public moralization. At St Lawrence Jewry in 1978, she argued that 'Freedom will destroy itself if it is not exercised within some sort of moral framework, some body of shared beliefs, some spiritual heritage'.[256] Indeed, while Leader of the Opposition, she told Patrick Cosgrave that her religious philosophy had moved 'higher and higher' towards a more sacerdotal outlook.[257] The question of the appropriate balance between individual faith and corporate worship has preoccupied generations of Anglicans of course. However, one might ponder whether it was entirely coincidental that Thatcher became more inclined to emphasize individual salvation,

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[253] Matthew Grimley, 'Thatcherism, Morality and Religion', in Jackson and Saunders (eds), *Making Thatcher's Britain,* pp.78-94, at p.90; Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p.556.

[254] Margaret Thatcher, Speech to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 21 May 1988, MTFW (107246). Jonathan Raban, in a literary critique of Thatcher's address, derided the Prime Minister's apparent equation of the Crucifixion with the 'Right to Buy' council housing or a hospital paybed. Jonathan Raban, *God, Man & Mrs Thatcher: A Critique of Mrs Thatcher's Address to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1989), p.33.

[255] Hugo Young, *One of Us: A Biography of Margaret Thatcher* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp.5, 419; John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher, Volume 1: The Grocer's Daughter* (London: Pimlico, 2000), pp.15-18; Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics and the Decline of Deference*, p.157.

[256] Margaret Thatcher, Speech at St Lawrence Jewry, 31 March 1978, MTFW (103552).

[257] Patrick Cosgrave, *Margaret Thatcher: A Tory and her Party* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), p.136.

rather than the collective aspect of Britain's religious heritage, as her governments adopted a more libertarian philosophy in other spheres of policy.

Contextualizing Thatcher's 'sermons' beyond the Prime Minister's personal faith indicates that her remarks correlated with a broader decline in faith in centralized exhortation as a means of inducing attitudinal change amongst the public. The increasingly strained relationship between the Thatcher governments and the Church of England no doubt reinforced the Prime Minister's disinclination to stress the corporate aspects of religious life. *Faith in the City*, a report commissioned by Robert Runcie, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1985, was highly critical of government policy. Partly as a result of such criticisms, Thatcher turned to the economist Brian Griffiths, who became director of the Policy Unit in 1985.[258] Griffiths, a devout evangelical Christian, had consistently argued that libertarian, free market policies and wealth-creation positively fostered a Christian ethos by encouraging individual responsibility and private charity.[259] In other words, Griffiths was the figure who assisted Thatcher in reconciling the prevailing trajectory of her government's policies with her religious outlook. The decline in influence of advisors from a High Church background, like Peter Utley, whose imprint one can discern in Thatcher's earlier St Lawrence Jewry speeches, paralleled a broader decline in faith by the government in corporate moralization.[260] For the ecclesiastical historian Edward Norman, the government had moved away from an organic conception of a collective national consciousness and had become reconciled to social pluralism, incorporating religious, ethnic and cultural diversity. While the government might have hoped that freedom of choice would permit unitary values to

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[258] Eliza Filby, *God & Mrs Thatcher: The Battle for Britain's Soul* (London: Biteback, 2015), p.235.

[259] Brian Griffiths, *Morality and the Market Place* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982); idem, *The Creation of Wealth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984); idem, 'The Conservative Quadrilateral', in Michael Alison and David L. Edwards (eds), *Christianity and Conservatism: Are Christianity and Conservatism Compatible?* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990), pp.217-41.

[260] For a detailed study of Utley's religious and political ideas see Julia Stapleton, 'T. E. Utley and the Renewal of Conservatism in Post-War Britain', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 19 (2014), pp.207-26. Utley died in June 1988, four months prior to Thatcher's 'Sermon on the Mound'.

flourish, more likely, in Norman's mind, was that freedom of choice would extend into moral concerns.[261] The government was both reconciled to, and engaged in reinforcing, the breakdown of national cultural homogeneity, which Tories like Norman valued so dearly.

4.4 Conclusion

In a strange sort of way, the government's attitude towards public opinion by 1987 was both more optimistic and more pessimistic than it had been in 1979. On the one hand, successive electoral victories had to some extent dispelled the notion that the Conservatives must 'reverse the trend' to cure the body politic of the blight of socialism. Yet, at the same time, the party was more pessimistic about the capacity of politicians to shape popular attitudes and behaviour autonomously. While they might have hoped that 'responsible' moral values would revive as a ramification of the financial and economic practices induced by material incentives, there was a clear sense that the government had come to appreciate the limits of their power to mould public behaviour. The Stepping Stones approach, which sought to convince the public of the necessity to alter their behaviour, was superseded by a 'micropolitical' approach that sought to work with the grain of social and economic change. Meanwhile, the CPS's remit contracted, as it became a branch of the government's policymaking machinery, rather than a 'trail-blazer' delineating a holistic vision of society. Once more, the government sought to nudge voter behaviour through material incentives rather than rhetoric, 'action not words'. However, while the new constituency of 'ordinary' voters uncovered by the Thatcher governments was amenable to the government's free market economic policies, it is less certain that they shared the social conservatism of the majority of the Conservative Party.[262] Rising popular individualism and the concomitant decline of deference, along with

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[261] Edward Norman, 'Do British Parties Need Philosophies?', in Alison and Edwards (eds), *Christianity and Conservatism*, pp.164-78, pp.172-4.

[262] Raphael Samuel, 'Mrs Thatcher and Victorian Values', in idem, *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain, Theatres of Memory, Volume II* (London: Verso, 1998), pp.330-48, at p.336.

the disaggregation of social and economic structures, rendered centralized governance less effective. As Middlemas recognized, having rolled back corporatist structures and weakened union power, the Thatcher governments uncovered a new dimension of ungovernability.[263]

Although public attitudes undoubtedly evolved over the course of the Thatcher governments, it would be stretching the truth to argue that Britain saw either a renaissance of traditional values or the widespread flourishing of an 'enterprise culture'. In spite of Thatcher's personal abhorrence of debt, the rapid growth of private credit and decline in household savings imply that the British public were hardly becoming thriftier.[264] Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, in her re-analysis of Paul Thompson's '100 Families' oral history project, conducted between 1985 and 1988, has noted that while interviewees were increasingly likely to adopt 'middle-class' consumption patterns, this did not necessarily translate into a concomitant '*embourgeoisement*' in cultural terms. In fact, the value placed by socially mobile interviewees on displays of 'authenticity' and 'ordinariness', along with their latent anti-establishment feeling, implied, according to Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, that social mobility had precipitated the diffusion of values with roots in *working-class* cultures.[265] This climate of opinion, while hardly 'infected by socialism', was acquisitive and undeferential. The Thatcher governments' promise to expand individual choice and ownership, as well as their challenge to vested interest groups, apparently resonated with this constituency. However, rather than leading the public to embrace what Shirley Letwin termed the 'vigorous virtues', the Conservative Party found itself propitiating their material concerns, becoming akin to the party of consumers.

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[263] Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 3*, p.275.

[264] Samuel, 'Mrs Thatcher and Victorian Values', p.341; Ivor Crewe, 'The Policy Agenda: A New Thatcherite Consensus?', *Contemporary Record* 3 (1990), pp.2-7, at p.3. Household savings declined as a percentage of disposable income from 16.3% in 1980 to just 1.3% in 1988.

[265] Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics and the Decline of Deference*, p.100.

Chapter Five: The New Marketed Politics

By the mid-1980s the Thatcher government's primary concern was to foster market relationships, which was regarded now as the most effective means of influencing public behaviour. Political education was devolved, in many respects, from political leaders and institutions to the level of individual market relationships. However, political parties were not entirely autonomous from this market-driven politics, overseeing the process deistically from above. In fact, the Conservative Party was increasingly conscious of increasing its own (electoral) market share, embracing the outlook and methodologies of the private sector. Hence, the party's own behaviour was also moulded by market imperatives. The employment of marketing agencies not only initiated another period of meditation on the changing nature of British society; it also arguably changed the nature of the relationship between political leaders and the public. In the case of the Conservative Party, it would be more accurate perhaps to say that the marketing of politics reinforced the transition to a more individualistic and materialistic perspective, harmonizing with the government's microeconomic turn. This consumer-driven politics strengthened the government's growing inclination to go with the grain of social and cultural changes.

Having delineated the rise and fall of the Stepping Stones strategy and the concurrent turn to 'micropolitics', this chapter takes a step back, considering how the methodologies and epistemologies of marketing agencies influenced the Thatcher governments' evolution. The chapter adopts, therefore, a slightly more synchronic perspective, considering the *a priori* assumptions that informed the practice of 'marketing' and their intellectual heritage. The rapid growth of the marketing and public relations (PR) industries was a notable development in the early 1980s, a period of drastic economic upheaval. Whereas only one in five of the FTSE 200 employed PR agencies in 1979, by 1984 the proportion had risen to more than four in

five.[1] Historians of modern British history have not considered the political repercussions of these developments in the private sector extensively. Steven McKevitt has reflected recently that the *practice* of what he terms the 'persuasion industries' are not well understood.[2] Historical studies of their development and impact on British politics in the 1980s are dominated by sensationalized insider accounts of the advertising business and journalistic reportage.[3] Partly, this reflects the paucity of the 'paper trail' on account of the marketing and PR industries' concern for clients' privacy and reluctance, in a competitive marketplace, to divulge their methods.[4] However, by scrutinizing the reports of marketing research that have been declassified in the Conservative Party Archive in recent years, one can make certain inferences about the influence of the marketing approach on the trajectory of the Thatcher governments.

The Conservative Party was one of the pioneers in employing marketing consultants. Famously, Gordon Reece opened an account with the upstart advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi Garland Compton [hereafter Saatchi & Saatchi] in 1978. As we saw in Chapter Three, the input of Saatchi & Saatchi coincided with, and counteracted to some extent, Hoskyns and Strauss's attempts to implement the Stepping Stones strategy. However, rather than regarding the 'Labour Isn't Working' poster campaign as a seminal moment in British political history, it would be more accurate perhaps to describe it as just another party advertising campaign, in a similar vein to the Colman Prentis and Varley campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s.[5] Saatchi & Saatchi's essential business remained largely, at that point, the *selling* of

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[1] Steven McKevitt, *The Persuasion Industries: The Making of Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p.10.

[2] Ibid., p.vii.

[3] With the notable exceptions of Margaret Scammell, 'The Impact of Marketing and Public Relations on Modern British Politics: The Conservative Party and Government under Mrs Thatcher', unpublished PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science (1991); Joe Moran, 'Mass-Observation, Market Research and the Birth of the Focus Group, 1937-1997', *Journal of British Studies* 47 (2008), pp.827-51.

[4] McKevitt, *Persuasion Industries*, p.viii.

[5] For examples of their work, see Stuart Ball, *Dole Queues and Demons: British Election Posters from the Conservative Party Archive* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2011).

the Conservative Party, conveying its predetermined positions to the public, rather than the definition of its overarching strategic orientation.[6] In later years, marketing consultants would accrue much greater influence over the very nature of the party product as well as the process of its advertisement. In fact, the party was increasingly considered to be a 'brand', attuned to the lifestyles of its voters, mirroring, rather than educating, popular attitudes. In retrospect, one might go so far as to say that this amounted to a transition to a substantively new, marketed politics, in which the relationship between the party and the public was conceptually different.

Although this chapter contains synchronic analysis of the intellectual basis of the marketing process, it also traces its growing influence on the Conservative Party to a fairly specific point in time around 1986. Although the party continued to pay Saatchi & Saatchi a retainer after the 1979 general election, it would be wrong to assume that the agency's influence grew constantly. In fact, the agency's input during the 1983 general election campaign was lower than in 1979.[7] Marketing became much more central to the Conservatives' strategy during a period in which the party and government felt that it had lost its sense of direction. The retrospective illusion that 'Thatcherism' was advancing unassailably according to a predetermined plan seriously underestimates the extent to which the government was forced to revise its strategy periodically in light of unexpected circumstances and the unanticipated consequences of previous actions. In spite of their large parliamentary majority, the Conservative leadership was *still* not confident it had established a firm command over public opinion. Having survived half a decade of economic upheaval and industrial unrest, the party felt it had to reassess both its own agenda and the changing nature of the society they sought to govern.

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[6] Although market research was increasingly integrated into the development of advertisements through a process nebulously termed 'account planning'. See Winston Fletcher, *Powers of Persuasion: The Inside Story of British Advertising 1951-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.96.

[7] Philip Kleinman, *The Saatchi & Saatchi Story* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1987), p.32; Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, pp.60-1.

This chapter begins by considering the context in which the Conservative Party became increasingly reliant upon the research and strategic advice of marketing consultants. The 1986 Party Conference at Bournemouth was the occasion for what commentators would now term a 'relaunch', establishing 'The Next Moves Forward'. This slogan provided the overarching framework around which the party's policy and rhetoric was structured. Indeed, 'The Next Moves Forward' campaign was much more than simply a cosmetic exercise. Its themes informed the development of the party's policy agenda for a third term. The second section of the chapter delves deeper into the market research that informed this relaunch. The *Life in Britain* studies, commissioned by Saatchi & Saatchi, employed what were considered to be cutting-edge psychographic research techniques. However, as we shall see, 'psychographics' possessed a long intellectual heritage, which can be traced back to psychological theories developed in the 1940s and 1950s. This chapter considers why and how they were adopted in British market research in the mid-1980s, reflecting on the social and political context of the time as well as the exemplary influence of contemporary campaign strategies in the United States. Moreover, it contemplates how the latent influence of the epistemologies of market research might have contributed to the trajectory of the second half of Thatcher's premiership.

This trajectory certainly did not please Alfred Sherman who, by this time, had lost any practical influence over the government. He deemed the new 'adman ascendancy' to be a wholly malign development, which adulterated his ideal of political leadership.[8] Although Sherman was, by this time, a *persona non grata* in the government and CPS, it does not necessarily follow that his unanswered memoranda and journalistic obloquy are unworthy of study. Indeed, an exposition of the extent of his antipathy towards the new marketed politics can help us to clarify the extent to which the Thatcher governments had diverged from much of the animating ethos of the early New Right. Marketing consultants did more than just add gloss to electoral

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[8] Alfred Sherman, 'Why the Image Men are Against the Grain', *Guardian*, 20 July 1987, p.20.

campaigning; they imported new epistemologies, encouraging Conservative politicians to think differently about the essential nature of British society and their relationship to the public. In this sense, one might contend that they directly supplanted Sherman and his CPS associates as the new trailblazers of British politics.

5.1 The Next Moves Forward

With the benefit of hindsight, Margaret Thatcher's second term of office appears to have marked the zenith of her power - a period during which the prime minister could have 'everything she wants'.[9] However, that was certainly not how it felt to leading Conservatives at the time. In fact, in the months prior to the party conference in Bournemouth in October 1986, the prime minister's advisers insisted that the party embark upon a radical relaunch in order to get over 'the hump'.[10] Cabinet divisions over the sale of Westland Helicopters and, to a lesser extent, the future of British Leyland, had plagued the preceding twelve months and private party polling painted a bleak picture of public disillusionment with the government. On the eve of the conference, more than fifty per cent of the public saw the government as divided. Sixty-four per cent disliked the government's policies and fifty-eight per cent disliked the prime minister personally.[11] Perhaps unsurprisingly, Thatcher's advisers attributed much of this decline in popularity to media distortion. In formulating her conference speeches, Thatcher, as usual, drew upon an eclectic band of 'irregulars'. David Hart, who rather eccentrically considered himself to be Thatcher's eyes and ears on 'the street',[12] warned her that she had been 'captured by certain facets of

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[9] Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography. Volume Two: Everything She Wants* (London: Allen Lane, 2015).

[10] David Hart note for Margaret Thatcher, 'Getting Over the Hump'. 31 July 1986, The Papers of Baroness Thatcher LG, OM, FRS, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge [hereafter TP], THCR 1/1/32.

[11] Richard Kelly, *Conservative Party Conferences: The Hidden System* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), p.142.

[12] A property developer, former *avant-garde* film producer and associate of the CPS, Hart had unilaterally sought to organise working miners during the strike of 1984-85. See Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, pp.152-54, 161, 172; Simon Heffer, 'Hart, David (1944-2011)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Jan 2015

[her] personality', which were a 'travesty' of her true self.[13] Similarly, Bill Davis, a former editor of *Punch* magazine and BBC presenter, complained that the media was distorting her strong leadership into an impression of intransigence.[14] Clearly, something had to be done to overcome these 'distortions'. The Media Monitoring Unit (MMU), established by the party chairman, Norman Tebbit, was one such response.[15] However, as we shall see, the party's adaptation to a rapidly changing media landscape was a much broader process.

Indeed, underlying such invectives against media 'bias' was a tacit acknowledgement that the party must reinvent its message to take account of a changing social and political context. Following the defeats of Benn, Galtieri and Scargill, Davis suggested that the Conservatives were now faced with an 'enemy gap', which exposed the government's want of a 'clear vision of a bright future'.[16] Rehashing the sterile debates of 1979 was little use when, partly as a result of their own policies, the government had overseen rapid changes in Britain's economy and society by 1986. 'People are sick', Davis stressed, 'of self-denigration and perpetual talk of "crisis"'. Rather than holding out the prospect of a future reversal of national decline, it was time 'to get used to the realities of the 1980s' and accept that 'change is inevitable'.[17] 'Reversing the trend' was no longer an appropriate message for a government that had held office for seven years and would now, inescapably, be held accountable for prevailing socio-economic conditions. Hart reiterated Davis's message, advising Thatcher that 'The street needs to feel good about Britain' in order to re-elect the government.[18] Instead of accentuating defensive wars against 'the

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[https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-103498?rskey=ViEPo1&result=1, accessed 21 August 2019].

[13] Hart, 'Getting Over the Hump', THCR 1/1/32.

[14] Bill Davis memo to Margaret Thatcher, 'Some points for your consideration', 5 February 1986, TP, THCR 1/1/32.

[15] Tebbit had been infuriated, in particular, by the BBC's coverage of the American air strikes on Libya (from British air bases) in April 1986. See Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, pp.533-34.

[16] Davis, 'Some points for your consideration', THCR 1/1/32. He lamented that 'Bernie Grant never quite made it' to full folk devil status.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Hart, 'Getting Over the Hump', THCR 1/1/32.

enemy within', Lord (Ralph) Harris, the director of the IEA, argued that the Conservatives should use the upcoming conference to associate themselves with 'the wave of the future' towards 'private enterprise, deregulation and industrial freedom'.[19]

As we have seen, by the mid-1980s, the government increasingly viewed material incentives, rather than moral exhortation, as the primary means of catalysing socio-economic change. Neo-liberal economic reforms had gained precedence over the outlook that had inspired the CPS in its early years, which was preoccupied with what they conceived as the cultural determinants of national decline and revival. The advice of Thatcher's advisers to publicly celebrate the prevailing trajectory of socio-economic change only reinforced this materialistic propensity. Harris encouraged Thatcher to 'look around at the booming High Streets of Britain, fitted kitchens, motoring, central heating, hi-fi and videos, eating-out, foreign holidays and all the rest'.[20] The consumerist fruits of economic growth would be the wellspring of Conservative electoral success. The party should, in Harris's mind, adopt an unabashedly libertarian stance, declaring how they were 'tackling the obstacles to movement' and 'removing the impediments to enterprise'.[21] The 'obstacles' of which Harris spoke – taxation, regulation, and bureaucracy - were for the most part material or structural in nature. Their removal would, in his mind, liberate the rational and modernizing force of the free market. Beyond discussion of technical education, there was little concern for altering 'mental sets'. This philosophy sought to liberate the natural energies of the populace, nurturing, rather than transforming, their habitual nature.

The prime minister's speech to the Bournemouth conference sought to convey a renewed sense of momentum and signal 'The Next Moves Forward'. In an attempt to brush aside criticisms of the government's purported loss of direction, Thatcher feigned incredulity, asking 'Who says we've run out of steam?'. 'We're in

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[19] Lord Harris note, 'Thoughts on key themes', undated, c.1986, TP, THCR 1/1/34.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

our prime!', she insisted, noting how her government's policies were spreading ownership and choice to larger sections of the British populace.[22] The prime minister sought to portray Labour as a reactionary force who would 'put the clock back'. Whereas early progenitors of the New Right had decried the technocratic ethos of 'modernization', which was so pervasive in the 1960s, Thatcher now invoked memories of that era as a positive contrast to present-day Labour policies. 'Whatever happened to Harold Wilson's "white heat of the technological revolution"?', she pondered.[23] In espousing a rhetoric of modernization, Thatcher now sought to make a virtue of accepting prevailing trends, depicting those who resisted change as constraining progress.[24] Indeed, she presented these trends as being the result of immutable international forces. 'The whole of the industrial world, not just Britain,' she insisted, 'is seeing change at a speed that our forebears never contemplated, much of it due to new technology'. Unlike those she labelled the 'hand-wringing merchants of gloom', Thatcher argued that her government was prepared to embrace the opportunities afforded by socio-economic change.[25]

Of course, Thatcher's conference speech was quintessentially an exercise in public relations. However, as Andrew Gamble has argued, in spite of its limited policy-making power, the Conservatives' annual conference played an important role in reconciling the party's 'politics of support' to its 'politics of power'.[26] Hence, far from simply reflecting a superficial presentational change, Thatcher's adoption of a 'progressive' rhetoric of modernization was indicative of a more profound shift in the party's politics of power, constrained as it was by economic and social forces

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[22] Margaret Thatcher, Speech to Conservative Party Conference, Bournemouth, 10 October 1986, MTFW (106498).

[23] Ibid.

[24] Although, as Emily Robinson has highlighted, given its association with left-wing politics since the 1960s, members of Thatcher's governments tended to avoid the language of 'progressiveness'. Emily Robinson, *The Language of Progressive Politics in Modern Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

[25] Thatcher, Speech to Party Conference, 1986, MTFW (106498).

[26] Andrew Gamble, *The Conservative Nation* (London; Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), pp.13-14.

only partly within the government's command. Nevertheless, such presentational exercises were not simply one-way processes in which the government sought to win over its audience to support its intractable position. A process of 'marketing', in which the government sought to accommodate the preferences of a changing electorate, increasingly shaped the Thatcher government's 'product'. The methodologies of the party's marketing consultants, honed in the private sector, provided a new filter through which to pursue 'the two-way movement of ideas'.

5.2 The Ladder of Life

Although journalistic and intellectual 'outriders' continued to contribute to the prime minister's public relations efforts, their strategic influence was undoubtedly much diminished by 1986. The parameters and tone of the Conservatives' electoral strategy were, at that point, substantially determined by the professional research of a group of advertising and market research agencies. Although Saatchi & Saatchi Garland Compton had held an account with the Conservative Party since 1978, their links to the party became much more pronounced during Norman Tebbit's period as party chairman. In 1986, Michael Dobbs, the deputy chairman of Saatchi & Saatchi, was seconded to Conservative Central Office to serve as Chief of Staff, reflecting the unprecedented strategic centrality now accorded to marketing.[27] The Bournemouth Conference and its theme, 'The Next Moves Forward', were entirely co-ordinated by Saatchis, essentially marking the start of the party's campaign for re-election the following year.[28] Ministers' speeches and plans for the next three years were submitted to Tebbit and Dobbs who ensured they conformed to the overarching thematic framework.[29] The necessity to present a cohesive and polished package at

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[27] Kleinman, *Saatchi & Saatchi Story*, p.32. Saatchi & Saatchi continued to pay Dobbs' £60,000 salary.

[28] Norman Tebbit, 'The Conservative Campaign', in Ivor Crewe and Martin Harrop (eds), *Political Communications: The General Election Campaign of 1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.43-8, at p.43.

[29] Rodney Tyler, *Campaign! The Selling of the Prime Minister* (London: Grafton Books, 1987), p.45; Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, pp.537-8.

Bournemouth was given greater urgency by the Labour Party's increasingly professional approach to public relations. That year, Peter Mandelson, the party's Director of Communications, had initiated the so-called 'Red Rose Revolution', attempting to give the party a more up-to-date image.[30] Although Labour's rebranding didn't impress Bernard Ingham, who dismissed it as 'powder puff',[31] the Conservatives were in fact just as, if not more, conscious about establishing a consistent brand identity. The 'Next Moves Forward' strategic framework, which was launched in Bournemouth and retained for the 1987 election campaign, was based on meticulous research and testing by BJM Research Associates Ltd (commissioned by Saatchi & Saatchi). The theme aimed to convey an image of competence and clarity of direction, simultaneously reassuring the 'middle-class conscience' while offering hope to 'relatively deprived' areas of the country.[32] Moreover, it sought to counter Labour's recent efforts to rebrand by associating the party with 'turning the clock back'.[33] Hence, while these agencies did not explicitly prescribe Conservative Party policy, they did establish, or at least strengthen, the party's strategic orientation.

The process of establishing a consistent brand was essentially one of simplification, determining the positive aspects of the party's popular image and clarifying them by relating the party's public messages to those underlying strengths. Although, like its precursor the Stepping Stones project, political marketing took heed of the apparently latent emotive determinants of voter behaviour, its approach was altogether less cerebral. While the former had attempted to relay complex arguments about macroeconomic policy to the public, the latter made no attempt to unpack the government's policy agenda. Indeed, marketing agencies possessed a

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[30] Tim Bell, *Right or Wrong: The Memoirs of Lord Bell* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p.116; Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the Labour* Party, 4th edn (London: Palgrave, 2015), p. 227; Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, p.674.

[31] Bernard Ingham, Draft speech, 1 October 1986, TP, THCR 1/1/34.

[32] Conservative Central Office Election Campaign Plans, Draft One, December 1986, TP, THCR 2/7/5/3.

[33] Ibid.

rather low estimation of the average voter's level of political awareness. Saatchi &
Saatchi had made this explicit in discussions with the CRD in 1981. In order to 'get
behind the issues and policies to see what people are really feeling…and on what
basis they make their political decisions', the agency had commissioned a series of
group discussions throughout the country.[34] However, the responses were not as
politically coherent as the interviewers had hoped, demonstrating that a clear
separation between 'Life' and 'Politics' prevailed in the mind of the average voter.
From this, Saatchi & Saatchi deduced that the average voter's outlook was
characterized by 'cynicism, scepticism, [and] political primitiveness'. They found
that interviewees tended to retreat from 'appraisal of policies and issues', responding
instead to parties' 'emotive style'.[35] Moreover, this disregard for policy discussion
on the part of the public could by no means be presented as the result of a greater
concern for the 'higher' aspects of political philosophy. Saatchi & Saatchi were clear
that the majority of voters considered political philosophies to be 'abstract notions'
with 'little practical effect on everyday lives'. To the contrary, the *sine qua non* of
electoral success was, from their perspective, the 'general confidence and mood
generated by and emanating from a party'.[36] Thatcher's rebuke of the 'merchants of
gloom' in her conference speech can thus be read as a response to this belief in the
emotive determinants of political success.

One might contend that this concern for the 'confidence and mood' of the
public, informed by the qualitative surveys of marketing agencies, constituted a
professionalized interpretation of a traditional Tory approach, attempting to cultivate
an organic relationship with the public through what Rab Butler would have termed

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[34] Saatchi & Saatchi Garland Compton, Initial Report of Group Discussion Survey, May 1981, CPA,
CRD 4/27/88.

[35] Ibid. Political scientists would term these 'valence' judgements. See Heather Savigny, 'Political
Marketing', in Matthew Flinders, Andrew Gamble, Colin Hay and Michael Kenny (eds), *The Oxford
Handbook of British Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.798-820, at p.811;
McKevitt, *Persuasion Industries*, p.120.

[36] Saatchi & Saatchi Initial Report, CRD 4/27/88.

'the two-way movement of ideas'.[37] However, while one might contend that *reciprocity* was at the heart of the new marketing of politics,[38] encouraging political leaders to govern in deference to popular attitudes, it also arguably diluted the didactic element of political leadership. Certainly, there was a circumstantial element to the Conservatives' reluctance to lecture the public in 1986. A report by the Harris Research Centre the previous year had recorded members of the public recoiling from Mrs Thatcher's apparently condescending public manner. Thatcher was described as 'Too big for her boots' and 'talk[ing] down all the time'.[39] One respondent explained how the prime minister had, in their mind, lost her populist appeal:

You always associated yourself with Mrs Thatcher in the early days, the daughter of a grocer, she knew the fundamentals, she was one of you. All of a sudden you get the impression she's not one of you, she's swopped to being one of them.[40]

Such a statement reflected the public's declining inclination to defer to figures of authority; but it was also indicative of the curtailment of the consciously populist strategy, which the CPS had driven during the Conservatives' years in opposition. As we have seen, during the late 1970s the Conservatives and their outriders dedicated much of their intellectual effort to superseding what they deemed to be the prevailing discourse of class conflict. However, once in government, a preoccupation with crisis management had diverted the attention of thinkers like John Hoskyns away from this

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[37] Philip Norton, 'The Role of the Conservative Political Centre, 1945-98', in Stuart Ball and Ian Holliday (eds), *Mass Conservatism: The Conservatives and the Public since the 1880s* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp.183-200; Charles Lockwood, '"Action Not Words": The Conservative Party, Public Opinion and "Scientific" Politics, c.1945-70', *Twentieth Century British History* (2019), hwz014, https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwz014.

[38] Margaret Scammell, *Consumer Democracy: The Marketing of Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.165.

[39] Harris Research Centre, Communication Theme Research, September 1985, CPA, CCO 180/4/3/1, p.45.

[40] Ibid., pp.45, 49.

long-term project of cultural reorientation. Eventually, influential figures within the orbit of the New Right - especially Nigel Lawson and Samuel Brittan – fuelled a more sceptical attitude towards abstract, imprecise notions of cultural and discursive change. Yet, while the government increasingly sought to effect social and cultural transformation through microeconomic incentives, it nevertheless seemed in late 1985 that a popular discourse of social division was alive and well. The Harris research vividly conveyed a prevalent public impression that the government, and Mrs Thatcher in particular, were isolated from the concerns of the majority of the population. Even if, as Sutcliffe-Braithwaite has argued, the Conservatives had succeeded in popularizing a language of 'ordinariness' in place of the language of class,[41] this had not automatically translated into greater popular identification with the Conservative government. In light of this realization, the following year's public relations strategy was dedicated to reconnecting the government with the feelings and aspirations of 'ordinary' people.

Yet, this concern to be responsive to popular concerns was not merely circumstantial. The methodological outlook of the party's marketing consultants also encouraged such an approach. John Hanvey, the director of the Conservatives' polling company ORC,[42] had established a connection with Ronald Reagan's chief political strategist, Richard (Dick) Wirthlin, after the latter's successful direction of the 1980 presidential campaign. As well as describing the potential electoral potency of telephone banks and direct mail, Wirthlin's advice contrasted with the inclination of many Tories to adopt an exhortatory approach to public relations, encouraging the public to adopt responsible, thrifty habits. Hanvey reported that, unlike the Conservatives under Thatcher, the Reagan campaign had taken the 'conscious decision <u>NOT</u> to ask for significant sacrifices from the people'.[43] From the

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[41] Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics and the Decline of Deference in England, 1968-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp.158-63.

[42] Hanvey had succeeded Humphrey Taylor in 1976. See Martin Rosenbaum, *From Soapbox to Soundbite: Party Political Campaigning in Britain since 1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p.156.

[43] John Hanvey memorandum to Alan Howarth, 8 June 1981, CPA, CRD 4/30/6/2. Hanvey emphasized that 'This was a very important dimension'.

American's perspective, in order to be successful, an electoral force would have to accept the electorate as they were. Wirthlin, Hanvey recalled, had insisted that 'Government needs to be responsive to the will of the people', rather than vice versa.[44] The methodologies and new technologies pioneered by Wirthlin were focused on *listening* to the public as much as they were on persuading them. His Political Information System (PINS) combined opinion polling with demographic data in order to model the impact of Reagan's rhetorical shifts on his electoral support. Wynton Hall has argued that this helped to generate a 'quantifiably safe rhetoric', in which Reagan's advisors could be confident that their candidate was telling target voters what they wanted to hear.[45] Moreover, they were able to establish 'ideographs', such as 'family, work, neighbourhood, peace, and freedom', which were sufficiently vague as to allow listeners to ascribe their own meanings to Reagan's words.[46] Such an approach was accommodative of existing public opinion and was, one might go as far as to say, antithetical to any attempt to reshape the climate of opinion and 'think the unthinkable'.

Nevertheless, the Conservative party machine emulated many of these American innovations. During the 1983 election campaign, the Marketing Department developed 'Operation Fast Feedback', whereby the daily responses of a panel of voters, selected to represent target demographic groups, would assist the party in fine-tuning their messaging in a similar manner to Wirthlin's PINS.[47] In fact, Christopher Lawson, the director of the Marketing Department, also worked on Reagan's campaign for re-election in 1984.[48] Yet, while an accommodative stance towards public opinion might have been a by-product of these campaign techniques, there is also evidence that a number of Conservative media and public relations

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Wynton C. Hall, 'The Invention of "Quantifiably Safe Rhetoric": Richard Wirthlin and Ronald Reagan's Instrumental Use of Public Opinion Research in Presidential Discourse', *Western Journal of Communications* 66 (2002), pp.319-46.

[46] Ibid., p.327.

[47] Keith Britto memo to Cecil Parkinson, 21 May 1983, CPA, CRD 2/27/94.

[48] Tim Bale, *The Conservatives since 1945: The Drivers of Party Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.257.

advisors consciously encouraged the party to adopt a more 'receptive' approach. David Boddy, the assistant director of communications at Central Office, had been urging the party to remain 'in-touch' with a 'fast-changing society' since the early years of Thatcher's premiership. He emphatically insisted that 'WE MUST RELATE CONSERVATISM TO <u>PEOPLE</u>, not ideology'.[49] Harvey Thomas, the party's Director of Presentations, reinforced this message. Somewhat improbably, he invoked the thinking of Rachel Pinney, a child therapist who maintained a personal silence every Wednesday in protest against nuclear weapons.[50] In order to develop an effective communication technique, Pinney argued that conversers ought to resist the 'urge to tell'. Instead, they should practise 'creative listening', switching off their own views and repeating the concerns of others in order to demonstrate empathy.[51] In order to close the affective division between politicians and the public, these advisers stressed that the party must listen and understand the public, rather than simply trying to convert public opinion to their own *a priori* viewpoint and remould public opinion into their desired form.

While the party might have devoted greater attention to understanding British voters, it would be a misconception to assume that the adoption of marketing techniques and the professionalization of the Conservative Party's public relations strategy necessarily expanded public engagement in political debate. As we shall see, a more sophisticated understanding of the electorate and the development of new technologies like direct mail permitted the targeting of messages to ever-smaller segments of the electorate. Rather than pursuing a grand 'battle of ideas' across British society, Cecil Parkinson, the party chairman during the 1983 general election campaign, could feel confident in cutting back on paid advertisements.[52] Although this decision was to their detriment financially, Saatchi & Saatchi adapted to the new

[49] David Boddy memo to Peter Thorneycroft, 24 June 1981, CPA, CRD 4/30/7/1.
[50] Harvey Thomas memo to Alan Howarth, 22 October 1981, CPA, CRD 4/30/6/2.
[51] Rachel Pinney, *Creative Listening*, 3rd edn (London, A to Z, 1981), CPA, CRD 4/30/6/2.
[52] Cecil Parkinson, *Right at the Centre: An Autobiography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1992), p.232; Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, p.60. Although Parkinson claimed that it was his initiative, Moore suggests that the directive ultimately came from the prime minister.

landscape. Their 1986 media review acknowledged that 'as the target group becomes more obvious, paid media becomes less relevant'.[53] Indeed, as Steven McKevitt has argued, the British marketing industry evolved during the 1980s from being a branch of sales, concerned with the formulation of direct, external appeals to consumers, to become a much more sophisticated strategic discipline with recourse to a broader range of indirect appeals and product positioning. Advertising declined in importance within the broader marketing industry relative to the discipline of 'public relations' (PR), which adopted more precisely targeted and covert means of persuasion.[54] The Thatcher government's privatizations were an enormous catalyst for the growth of the PR industry, as agencies like Lowe-Bell were commissioned to cultivate potential investors.[55] The prominence of advertising campaigns like the famous 'Tell Sid' campaign during the privatization of British Gas (1986-87) should not be allowed to obscure the fact that such mass appeals were declining in *relative* importance to the government. Marketing agencies possessed a narrow concern to motivate the small percentage of voters who would swing an election; they did not possess a broader, idealistic agenda of cultivating an educated and responsible citizenry.

Saatchi & Saatchi's paid advertising during the 1987 general election campaign was widely considered disappointing. Labour's Party Election Broadcast (PEB), produced by *Chariots of Fire* director Hugh Hudson, undoubtedly overshadowed the Conservatives' efforts.[56] However, the Conservatives' campaigning was arguably more effective below the radar.[57] In contrast to the two previous general election campaigns, Saatchi & Saatchi were no longer primarily

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[53] Saatchi & Saatchi paper, 'Media Review and Proposals', 21 November 1986, CPA, CRD 4/30/7/4.
[54] McKevitt, *Persuasion Industries*, pp.104-5, 144.
[55] Ibid., pp.157-8. The government spent £15.4 million (£44 million in 2018) on PR services during the privatization of British Gas, which was handled by Lowe-Bell.
[56] Labour Party Election Broadcast, May 1987 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=82&v=p-3OscH1qK0, accessed 23 September 2019]; Kleinman, *Saatchi & Saatchi Story*, pp.33-4; Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, pp.695-7.
[57] Crewe and Harrop (eds), *Political Communications*, p.xiii.

preoccupied with mass advertising campaigns. PEBs and national newspaper advertisements were blunt instruments when compared with more modern forms of political communication. Saatchi & Saatchi's 1986 media review placed greater emphasis on the isolation of target segments of the electorate – particularly those groups who had benefitted materially from the government's reforms.[58] Such an approach, isolating and manipulating material interest groups, dovetailed with public choice analyses, which were gaining ever more credence within the Thatcher government. Moreover, given the increasingly fragmented nature of the media market in the 1980s, demographic and sub-cultural groups could now be reached more precisely with tailored messages.[59] Indeed, the review paper argued the placing of 'PR style' messages in such publications would be a more effective means of conveying policy messages than traditional forms of advertising.[60] Often this involved covert strategies, such as the cultivation of relationships with journalists and the planting of amenable material.[61] John Lacy, the Conservative Party's director of campaigning, incorporated the lessons of the Saatchi & Saatchi review into the party's 'Impact 80s' project, which sought to modernize the Conservatives' campaigning techniques.[62] By 1987, around half of Conservative constituency associations were computerized with Amstrad PCs, allowing them to wage direct mail campaigns that targeted segments of the electorate on the basis of canvas data.[63] Lacy suggested that telephone canvassing and direct mail could be employed to

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[58] Saatchi & Saatchi, 'Media Review', CPA, CRD 4/30/7/4.

[59] McKevitt, *Persuasion Industries*, pp.44-5. McKevitt claims that it was during the 1980s that the adjective 'alternative' began to be used to refer to non-mainstream forms of music, film and television (p.44).

[60] Saatchi & Saatchi, 'Media Review', CPA, CRD 4/30/7/4.

[61] McKevitt, *Persuasion Industries*, p.105.

[62] John Lacy, Campaigning/Training Department: Programme for 1987, November 1986, CPA, CRD 4/30/7/4.

[63] Kevin Swaddle, 'Ancient and Modern: Innovations in Electioneering at the Constituency Level', in Crewe and Harrop, *Political Communications*, p.33. However, Norman Tebbit abandoned plans to for a national direct mail campaign sent from Central Office following legal advice that it would be in breach of electoral law (p.37).

target small business owners and newly affluent ethnic minority voters.[64] Rather than appealing indiscriminately to a singular, collective public, the party now tailored its messages to particular, materially defined interest groups.

One might argue that segmenting the electorate on the basis of demographic and financial interest groups constituted a reversion to some of the more crudely reductionist sociological approaches that the New Right had once defined itself against. As we have seen, Conservative intellectuals in the 1970s critiqued electoral sociology on the basis that political identities and public opinion were relatively autonomous from material determinants, instead being moulded by cultural traditions and political leadership. While political marketing could be presented as a more advanced means of grasping the public 'mood', the moralistic, didactic conception of political leadership of Conservative intellectuals was certainly alien to the marketing industry, whose *raison d'être* was the discovery and gratification of consumer desires. As Margaret Scammell has argued, even if sophisticated marketing techniques held the potential to generate, as well as accommodate, consumer demands, marketing was nonetheless largely consumer-oriented.[65] Popular attitudes and wants were the starting point of research, to which the political 'product' was expected to adapt. The adoption of marketing techniques in the political sphere hence narrowed the latitude of political elites to construct their appeals independently. Idealistic, long-term aspirations to cultivate an educated citizenry were difficult to accommodate within a 'marketing concept' oriented to achieving immediate rewards.[66]

Hence, the marketing methodologies of the 1980s, in their emphasis upon accepting the public as they were, rather than attempting to reform them, bore some resemblance to the electoral sociology of the 1960s. However, by contrast, they did not assume that political behaviour was largely determined by material

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[64] Lacy, Programme for 1987.

[65] Scammell, 'Impact of Marketing and Public Relations', pp.15-16; Scammell, *Consumer Democracy*, pp.16-17.

[66] Scammell, *Consumer Democracy*, p.63.

circumstances. Qualitative research techniques, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, were employed in an attempt to determine the psychological and emotive influences on voter behaviour. Social scientists had tended, in previous decades, to deride such methods as unscientific. Joe Moran has suggested that the 'motivation research', pioneered in the 1950s by Ernest Dichter, gave qualitative consumer research a bad name. Retrospectively, Dichter could be presented as one of the progenitors of focus groups and 'projective techniques' in market research. However, his penchant for Freudian psychoanalysis was widely ridiculed at the time.[67] British market researchers, who were typically trained statisticians, considered Dichter's reliance on intuition and interpretation 'un-scientific' and 'naïve' when compared with their precisely measured sampling techniques.[68] It was only in the 1980s that British market research agencies had come to embrace qualitative methodologies in order to comprehend what appeared to be a more diverse and fragmented marketplace. Rising disposable incomes enabled consumption patterns to be driven by wants as well as material needs, undermining crudely economically deterministic models of consumer behaviour. Consequently, the marketplace now appeared fragmented less according to rigid social classes than by more diverse and voluntary lifestyle patterns.[69] It was in this context that British marketing agencies began to draw upon research methods developed in the United States, where concepts of 'lifestyle' were more prevalent.

These marketing methodologies, which allied quantitative demographic data with the qualitative results of in-depth interviews and focus groups, came under the umbrella term of 'psychographics'. Their growth in the 1980s represented an effort

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[67] Moran, 'Mass-Observation', p.844; Barrie Gunter and Adrian Furnham, *Consumer Profiles: An Introduction to Psychographics* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.32-3. This ridicule often contained an anti-Semitic undercurrent.

[68] Stefan Schwarzkopf, '"Culture" and the Limits of Innovation in Marketing: Ernest Dichter, Motivation Research and Psychoanalytic Consumer Research in Great Britain, 1950s-1970s', *Management & Organizational History* 2 (2007), pp.219-236, at pp.225-6.

[69] Colin McDonald and Stephen King, *Sampling the Universe: The Growth, Development and Influence of Market Research in Britain since 1945* (Henley-on-Thames: NTC Publications, 1996), pp.5, 54-7; Gunter and Furnham, *Consumer Profiles*, p.1.

by marketing agencies to comprehend what was widely perceived to be the growing complexity and fluidity of consumer tastes and lifestyles in a society with ever-greater freedom of choice. Social distinction seemed to be increasingly determined by voluntary consumption patterns, rather than on an occupational basis.[70] Frank Mort has gone so far as to argue that the decade witnessed an 'epochal shift' away from production-led to consumption-led values.[71] Yet, in spite of their cutting-edge reputation, psychographic techniques largely drew upon much older theories from the mid-twentieth century social and behavioural sciences. Perhaps the most famous psychographic model, 'Values and Lifestyles' (VALS), developed by Arnold Mitchell at the Stanford Research Institute in 1978, drew heavily upon the psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs.[72] Maslow's theory posited that, with growing affluence, needs-driven human motivations would be superseded by a process of 'self-actualization', whereby individuals sought to express their unique personality.[73] Writing in 1943, Maslow believed that those whose basic needs were satisfied to the extent that they were able to strive towards self-actualization were the exception.[74] However, in the mass consumption society of the 1980s, those deprived of basic material needs were now exceptional. Hence, the psychographic research of the 1980s bypassed questions of physiological and safety needs, focusing on the latter stages of the needs hierarchy - the pathways towards individual self-fulfilment.

The VALS model translated Maslow's model into an *a priori* model of personal development, in which individuals either followed an 'outer-directed' pathway of emulation, or an 'inner-directed' one of self-reflection, towards the ideal

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[70] Mike Savage, 'Status, Lifestyle and Taste', in Frank Trentmann (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.551-67, at p.559.

[71] Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.4.

[72] Gunter and Furnham, *Consumer Profiles*, p.71; Moran, 'Mass-Observation', p.846.

[73] Abraham H. Maslow, 'A Theory of Human Motivation', *Psychological Review* 50 (1943), pp.370-96, at p.382.

[74] Ibid., p.383.

'integrated' state.[75] These cultural pathways were merely superficially different expressions of universal unconscious desires. Like Dichter's motivation research, VALS sought to model individuals' subconscious predispositions on a scientific basis. However, in doing so, the model relied on the basic assumption that individuals were engaged in a constant effort of self-improvement, driven by a basic human instinct of aspiration.[76] In the words of Maslow, 'Man is a perpetually wanting animal'.[77] Paradoxically, in spite of its contingency upon the satiation of basic wants, the cognitive process of self-actualization was envisaged nonetheless as a fundamentally instinctive, subconscious process. Human aspiration and self-improvement were thus not dependent upon exhortation, or education, by others – they were assumed to be intrinsic to human nature. Thus, while psychographic research sought to supply a dynamic model of a rapidly changing society, its adoption did, nonetheless, impose certain *a priori* assumptions on its adherents. One might go so far as to say that motivation theory, which underpinned psychographics, implicitly encouraged a form of liberal perspective, in which the granting of freedoms, rather than paternalistic guidance, would facilitate individual self-betterment.

VALS' emphasis on innate human aspiration certainly chimed with Margaret Thatcher. It is well documented that the American marketing agency Young & Rubicam's 'Cross-Cultural Consumer Categorization' (CCCC) models, which emulated VALS, aroused the prime minister's enthusiasm in 1986.[78] Thatcher's turn to Young & Rubicam (and concomitant disillusionment with Saatchi & Saatchi) is

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[75] George Brock, 'New Weapon in the Battle for the "Belongers"', *The Times*, 5 August 1986, TP, THCR 2/6/3/57; Gunter and Furnham, *Consumer Profiles*, pp.72-3; Moran, 'Mass-Observation', pp.846-7.

[76] Gunter and Furnham, *Consumer Profiles*, p.72.

[77] Maslow, 'Theory of Human Motivation', p.370.

[78] Dennis Kavanagh, *Election Campaigning: The New Marketing of Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp.62-3; Kleinman, *Saatchi & Saatchi Story*, p.34; Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, pp.522, 527-8; John Sharkey, 'Saatchi's and the 1987 Election', in Crewe and Harrop, *Political Communications*, pp.63-71, at p.67; Bell, *Right or Wrong*, pp.117-19; Scammell, 'Impact of Marketing', p.168; Tyler, *Campaign!*, pp.40, 225-7.

usually interpreted as a proxy for internecine party feuds between Thatcher and Tebbit and their respective associates from the advertising sphere, Tim Bell and Michael Dobbs.[79] Young & Rubicam's research was perhaps more reassuring for Thatcher than the Harris research commissioned by Saatchi & Saatchi. Its overt emphasis on aspiration perhaps allowed Thatcher to feel more optimistic about the prevalent social and cultural trends in Britain and the record of her governments. As we have seen, behind the Conservatives' optimistic public rhetoric of 'The Next Moves Forward', there remained a constant undercurrent of pessimism regarding social and cultural trends in Britain.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to read too much into the rivalry between Saatchi & Saatchi and Young & Rubicam. After all, *both* agencies drew upon similar psychographic models. Saatchi & Saatchi commissioned BJM to produce a series of in-depth research studies between 1982 and 1988, entitled *Life in Britain*, which conducted extended group discussions in marginal constituencies like Crawley and Erdington.[80] These unstructured discussions of 'the future', 'the present' and 'the past' emulated the methods of American pollsters, Pat Caddell and Dick Wirthlin, who served Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan respectively.[81] Their 'ladder of life' questions, asking interviewees to rate the progress of their life courses, similarly conceived of individual agents traversing a linear pathway of self-fulfilment. Asking interviewees where they expected to be in five years time was a useful gauge of

[79] Geoffrey Tucker, the Conservatives' Director of Publicity under Edward Heath, was now the party's contact within Young & Rubicam. Tom Arnold letter to John Whittingdale, 'VALS/Young and Rubicam', 18 April 1989, TP, THCR 2/6/4/2; Tyler, *Campaign!*, pp.225-6; Dennis Kavanagh, 'Obituary: Geoffrey Tucker', 15 January 2003, [https://www.theguardian.com/news/2003/jan/15/guardianobituaries.marketingandpr, accessed 26 September 2019]. Lord Young, whom Thatcher assigned to work with Tebbit on the election campaign, and Tim Bell, who had left Saatchi & Saatchi in 1985 to join Lowe Howard Spink, effectively ran a surreptitious parallel operation to that of Conservative Central Office, employing Young & Rubicam's research. See Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, pp.522-3, 682-91, 700-7.
[80] BJM Research, *Life in Britain – Findings*, August 1985, CPA, CCO 180/25, p.3; BJM, *Life in Britain: The Future*, July 1986, CPA, CRD 4/30/7/11; BJM, *Life in Britain 1988: Presentation Notes*, May 1988, CPA, CCO 180/25/1/33.
[81] BJM, *Life in Britain 1988;* Peter Kellner, 'Pollsters Find an Elegant New Tool for Prediction', *Independent*, 18 September 1989, TP, THCR 2/6/4/71.

confidence, which appeared to translate into support for the incumbent government.[82] Although these discussions took into account both the objective material and the subjective emotive dimensions of voter confidence, they were, in a sense, one-dimensional. Their general concern with voter confidence was unlikely to unpack questions regarding the nature of voters' values and aspirations.

Psychographic research tended to assume that the purportedly emotive determinants of voter behaviour were atavistic rather than rational. BJM defined its research as an attempt to determine how voters might be 'enthused' at election time. In seeking the 'more fundamental feelings and motives influencing political beliefs and decision making', they concluded that 'general perceptions [were] more important than specific issues'.[83] Indeed, the BJM researchers did not place much weight on interviewees' discussions of specific policy issues. '[A]t a descriptive level', they judged, responses tended to be 'highly superficial and very ambiguous'.[84] Discounting sophisticated awareness of policy discussions, the *Life in Britain* study posited that the 'political personality' was composed of three elements. The first element, labelled 'Calvinism', reflected the individual's sense of personal responsibility and work ethic. The second, 'Care', encompassed their compassion and sense of service. Finally, the individual's attitude to 'Leadership' reflected their willingness to defer to higher authority.[85] These personality attributes were considered to be universal. Differences between individuals' attitudes were not deemed to reflect any real substantive difference in values or goals; rather, they derived from variation in the balance between the three universal dimensions of personality. Such variations were accounted for in psychographic terms. For example, regional differences in attitudes to unemployment between Crawley in West Sussex and Formby in Merseyside in 1985 were said to reflect the areas' differing degrees of 'enclosure'. Discussions of 'inward-looking' and 'outward-

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[82] Kellner, 'Pollsters'.
[83] BJM, *Life in Britain*, August 1985, pp.1-2.
[84] Ibid., p.5.
[85] Ibid., pp.20-22.

looking' lifestyles, as well as 'tough-' and 'tender-minded' propensities drew indirectly from the theories of Maslow.[86] Whether individuals were inner or outer-directed, they were all seeking to proceed in the same direction, towards a fully 'self-actualized' or 'integrated' state of being.

The results of psychographic research no doubt contributed to the government's change of tone and strategic orientation in the mid-1980s. In August 1985, BJM reported a new sense of 'disturbance, and indeed a volatility, in people's feelings'.[87] In 1982, the people had apparently been possessed of a radical mood, such that they had responded to entreaties regarding the Calvinistic virtues.[88] But a change in mood by mid-decade meant that the appeals that worked well a few years earlier were now interpreted as 'pointless harshness' and 'out-of-touch stridency'.[89] In response to the worrying findings of August 1985, BJM were commissioned to conduct a more detailed study of voters' hopes and aspirations. Its findings revealed marked regional differences in levels of optimism, combined with a universal desire for 'short-term hope' and 'new directions'.[90] Whereas southern respondents were, on average, more 'cushioned from the realities' of economic hardship and 'inner-directed', inclining them to favour the preservation of the status quo, many northern respondents were, by contrast, more 'outer-directed'. Even if the latter's inner-directed thoughts were instinctively conservative, their awareness of local difficulties meant that outer-directed thoughts intruded upon their consciousness.[91] In order to address this unease, it would be necessary for the government to balance Calvinism with greater emphasis on the 'Caring Values'.[92]

The findings of BJM's *Life in Britain* survey informed the 'communication theme research' that Saatchi & Saatchi commissioned from Harris Research Centre.

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[86] Ibid., p.16-18.
[87] Ibid., p.5.
[88] Ibid., p.6; BJM, *Life in Britain: The Future*, July 1986.
[89] BJM, *Life in Britain*, August 1985, pp.6-7.
[90] BJM, *Life in Britain: The Future*, July 1986, p.50.
[91] Ibid., p.14.
[92] Ibid., p.15.

It aimed to 'recreate [the] sense of dynamism and forward-looking purpose' that had been lost by mid-decade. While Margaret Thatcher's 'resolute approach' to leadership was exactly what the public desired in 1979, the report concluded that 'Some respondents were doubtful whether this style of leadership was correct for the problems facing the country in 1985'.[93] The party's future 'themes' would have to stress the 'new directions' and 'Caring Values' specified by the BJM research. Along this vein, Harris formulated a myriad of potential slogans – 'Facing the Future', 'Putting Britain on the Right Track', 'Caring for the Future' – before settling, by late-1986, on 'The Next Moves Forward'.[94] The sense of clear purpose and direction conveyed by this theme would, they hoped, dispel the haziness and confusion that had afflicted the party's presentation over the previous couple of years.

When Conservative Central Office came to draft their election campaign plans over the Christmas of 1986-87, they used the research commissioned by Saatchi & Saatchi as the primary starting point of their discussions. Their overwhelming strategic priority was to solidify the support of C1 and C2 'belongers', a group that research suggested desired 'controlled change', which maintained their sense of personal security. The Central Office draft campaign plan employed the terminology of the *Life in Britain* study in considering the means by which 'Calvinism' and 'Care' could be reconciled.[95] This would require, firstly, an effort to make inroads in 'vulnerable issue areas' like education and health. Kenneth Baker's detailed plans for education reforms to extend parental choice and establish a National Core Curriculum were a direct response to the dissatisfaction with state education expressed in focus group discussions, where participants expressed a desire for schools 'designed to meet the specific needs of children'.[96] Secondly, Central Office was convinced that they could accentuate the 'caring' aspects of their

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[93] Harris, Communication Theme Research, September 1985, pp.1, 6.

[94] Ibid., pp.18-19; Note of meeting at Chequers, 1 February 1987, CPA, CRD 4/30/7/27.

[95] CCO Election Campaign Plans, December 1986.

[96] Harris, Communication Theme Research, September 1985, p.13; Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography. Volume Three: Herself Alone* (London: Allen Lane, 2019), p.57.

liberal economic policies by linking economic growth with the theme of 'regeneration'. Thatcher's campaign tour should, the report suggested, include visits to a new hospital, a share shop and a Scottish electronics factory. It could culminate in a helicopter flight to the London Docklands, the most prominent example of urban regeneration promoted by free enterprise.[97] The excitement would be amplified by rallies of 'ordinary' party supporters, 'warmed up' by Bob Monkhouse and Ken Dodd and accompanied by a campaign theme tune composed by Andrew Lloyd-Webber.[98] This professionalized package was the culmination of four years of psychographic research. Rather than operating at the cognitive level, the Conservatives' priority was now to align the party's image with the deeper sentiments and unconscious desires of an apathetic electorate.

5.3 Reflections of an 'Unperson'

In early 1989, shortly after the birth of their first child, Daisy, Tim Bell and his wife Virginia bumped into their neighbour Alfred Sherman, who lived across the road in Belgravia. According to Bell's account, when he informed Sherman that the child was a girl, the latter responded 'Oh good, you won't have any trouble with schools then'. 'We stood there and rocked with laughter', Bell recalled to *Harpers & Queen* magazine.[99] The elder man's assumption that educational concerns were less pressing for daughters than sons typified, in Bell's mind, the antediluvian attitudes of an older generation of Conservatives.

It would be tempting to write Sherman off as an eccentric bigot, out-of-step with the cultural norms of 1980s Britain; however, this encounter is a useful reminder that a clash of cultures and worldviews prevailed between two men commonly considered to have belonged to the same ideological movement of

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[97] CCO Election Campaign Plans, December 1986. On the origins of Enterprise Zones and the London Docklands Development Corporation, see Sam Wetherell, 'Freedom Planned: Enterprise Zones and Urban Non-Planning in Post-War Britain', *Twentieth Century British History* 27 (2016), pp.266-89.
[98] CCO Election Campaign Plans, December 1986.
[99] Nick Coleridge, 'The Bell époque', *Harpers & Queen*, April 1989, pp.175-7, 268-9, at p.176.

'Thatcherism'. While Sherman yearned to revive an organic national community of shared (conservative) values, Bell cared little for priggish moral scruples. If Sherman romanticized an imagined past, then Bell romanticized the brash world of the 1980s advertising industry. Fuelled by alcohol and cocaine, Bell sought to break down hierarchies and question customary practices.[100] In his memoirs, revealingly titled *Right or Wrong*, Bell waxed lyrical about the 'enterprise years', a period during which he believed 'Britain was becoming a completely different country', embracing innovation and jettisoning the constraints of antiquated custom.[101] Moral and cultural fundamentalism was alien to his rather hedonistic outlook. Indeed, as McKevitt has argued, the advertising industry in many ways embraced the values of the 1960s counter-culture, promising liberation through personal choice.[102] Conformity to traditional norms did not sell.

Predictably, Sherman was alarmed by what he described as the growing 'adman ascendancy' over the government.[103] However, his objections to their influence went beyond their attitudes to personal morality. In Sherman's mind, 'hyper-professionalisation' had resulted in a profound and malign change in the nature of British politics, which was inimical to the objectives he had pursued at the CPS.[104] Reflecting on the fallout from the Conservatives' 1987 election campaign, Sherman was probably correct to say that:

When rival groups of image-builders, advertising agents, pollsters and influence-salesmen personally or vicariously dispute the credit for present and previous Tory

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[100] Bell, *Right or Wrong*, p.99. Bell claimed that he used to drink heavily before meetings as a challenge to himself. It has been suggested that Bell's history of drug abuse and past conviction for public indecency underlay Norman Tebbit's personal animus towards him. See Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Two*, pp.521-2.

[101] Bell, *Right or Wrong*, p.99.

[102] McKevitt, *Persuasion Industries*, p.82.

[103] Sherman, 'Why the Image Men are Against the Grain'.

[104] Alfred Sherman essay, 'The Quest for Common Ground on Social Policy', December 1988, TP, THCR 2/6/4/99.

electoral victories, with the quality press hanging on their every word, it can only
serve as an indication of a prior evolution in British politics.[105]

In his mind, Thatcher's victory in 1979 was the culmination of 'Hard battles of
ideas', fought by academics and journalists, as well as politicians. Sherman was
incensed that 'admen' were now, from his perspective, rewriting history to grant
themselves credit for that victory when, in reality, 'the skills of the hairdresser, the
adman, the tv commercials producer or the fixer were marginal'.[106] Of course,
Sherman's account tendentiously downplayed the influence of advertising and
marketing in 1979 and exaggerated the extent and success of the 'battle of ideas'. In
fact, Sherman could well have been oblivious to the role of marketing in 1979, which
was handled largely by Central Office and the CRD.[107] Nevertheless, as we have
seen, there *is* a degree of truth in his argument that the strategic centrality of
marketing was a relatively recent phenomenon in 1987 and constituted a
qualitatively new development in British politics.

     One might contend that Sherman's ideal of a modern democracy was
somewhat romanticized and archaic. The importation of technologies and expertise
from outside of British politics – largely from the United States – was, he feared, an
alien imposition, which threatened to erode Britain's organic political culture. He
idealized an amateur and voluntary political culture, in which politicians established
'two-way contacts with the grass-roots' by 'Tramping the streets on wet Saturday
afternoons'.[108] His language echoed the ideals of an organic and well-informed civil
society that had inspired the foundation of the Conservative Political Centre after the
war.[109] Yet, Lawrence Black's attempt at an anthropological study of the Young

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[105] Sherman, 'Why the Image Men are Against the Grain'.
[106] Ibid.
[107] See above, section 3.7.
[108] Sherman, 'Why the Image Men are Against the Grain'.
[109] Philip Norton, 'The Role of the Conservative Political Centre, 1945-98', in Stuart Ball and Ian
Holliday (eds), *Mass Conservatism: The Conservatives and the Public since the 1880s* (London:
Routledge, 2013), pp.183-200.

Conservatives argued that much of the appeal of grassroots Conservatism came through the 'displacing of formal politics' in favour of light-hearted sociability.[110] Hence, one might contend that Sherman's ideal of an informed and active citizenry engaged in enthusiastic ideological debate was more characteristic of the political left, of which he was once part.[111] Nevertheless, political education, whether through grassroots activism or top-down exhortation, *was* a longstanding concern within Conservative politics.[112] While it discouraged agitation and zealous enthusiasm, Conservative political education had nonetheless traditionally sought to foster responsible citizenship (and inoculation against the temptations of socialism) through civic engagement.[113] This aspiration to improve, or even remake, the public was emphatically not part of the mandate of marketing consultants, whose sole *raison d'être* was electoral victory, a task which was inevitably easier if one accepted the people as they were, rather than as one wished them to be.

As we have seen, fear that the British public had become corrupted by socialism drove the New Right to advance an unusually reformist strain of Conservatism in the 1970s, which attempted to transform voters' 'Mental Sets' rather than accepting public attitudes as they were. Underlying the CPS's project to transform the climate of public opinion was a belief that political activity was ideologically determined. The pessimistic assessment of the electorate's potential for education that prevailed within the marketing industry was thus anathema to Sherman. He feared that the employment of 'manipulation technology' would

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[110] Lawrence Black, 'The Lost World of Young Conservatism', *Historical Journal* 51 (2008), pp.991-1024, at p.1014.

[111] On the evangelizing of Labour activists in the postwar period, see Steven Fielding, 'Activists against "Affluence": Labour Party Culture during the "Golden Age", circa 1950-1970', *Journal of British Studies* 40 (2001), pp.241-267.

[112] Gary Love, 'The Periodical Press and the Intellectual Culture of Conservatism In Interwar Britain', *Historical Journal* 57:4 (2014), pp.1027-56; Clarisse Berthezène, *Training Minds for the War of Ideas: Ashridge College, the Conservative Party and the Cultural Politics of Britain, 1929-54* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); Lockwood, '"Action Not Words"', pp.5-10.

[113] On the Conservatives' inter-war reaction against 'rowdyism', see Jon Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.123-5.

intellectually impoverish British politics by 'blunt[ing] the incentive to adduce and propagate ideas'. Political marketing was, in his mind, 'not just a scientific extension of the politician's traditional sense of what the public wants'; rather, it was 'a qualitatively new development in which leadership comes to be replaced by followership'.[114] Sherman's idealistic vision of a politics driven by ideas, rather than material interests, seemed antithetical to the *modus operandi* of the political marketing industry, which adapted the party 'product' to suit the whims and material interests of a fickle marketplace.

Under the influence of political marketing and public choice theory, amongst other factors, the government increasingly regarded interests, rather than ideas, as the primary determinant of political behaviour. Indeed, one can discern the extent to which the Conservative government's electoral philosophy had diverged from that of Sherman from the correspondence the latter exchanged (or attempted to exchange) with members of the government in the late 1980s. Since he was forced out of the CPS in 1983, becoming, in his words, an 'unperson', Sherman had continued nonetheless to attempt to convey his ideas to the party leadership.[115] Typically, he would receive a courtesy note from Thatcher's PPS informing him that the Prime Minister was 'considering your article and other material you sent with great interest'.[116] Meanwhile, the PPS would either decide it was not worth bothering the prime minister with, or would inform her that yet another 'long and unhelpful memorandum' from Alfred had arrived.[117] Following the receipt of an exceptionally long Sherman disquisition in December 1988, the prime minister's Principal Private Secretary, Andrew Turnbull, warned Brian Griffiths, Director of the Policy Unit, that

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[114] Sherman, 'Why the Image Men are Against the Grain'.

[115] Alfred Sherman, 'Strategies for a Third Thatcher Term: Intellectual Adventurousness is Indispensable to Political Success', Whitsun 1986, TP, THCR 2/6/3/156.

[116] For example, Michael Alison memorandum to Alfred Sherman, 23 January 1987, TP, THCR 2/6/3/156.

[117] For example: Michael Alison memorandum to Margaret Thatcher, 13 December 1987, TP, THCR 2/6/3/156; John Whittingdale note to Margaret Thatcher, 'Alfred Sherman', 29 September 1989, TP, THCR 2/6/4/99; John Whittingdale note to Margaret Thatcher, 'Alfred Sherman', 3 November 1989, TP, THCR 2/6/4/99.

sending it to Thatcher would undoubtedly 'irritate her', given that it was, as he saw it, 'long on intellectual wordplay and short on a practical agenda for action!'.[118] Sherman's belief in the formative role of ideas and customary beliefs in moulding behaviour was out of step with an administration preoccupied with short-term priorities of empirical reform. It is crystal clear that Thatcher had little patience for Sherman by this point. When John Whittingdale, her final political secretary, inferred that Sherman was angling for a job as the prime minister's advisor, Thatcher wrote back emphatically that 'There can be <u>no question of taking on Alfred</u>'.[119] Whereas Sherman had satisfied Thatcher's need for ideas and philosophy when she was seeking to establish political momentum in opposition, his proclivity to abstraction and readiness to critique government policy was not welcome, to say the least, now that she was long-established in government.

Reading Sherman's 'Strategies for a Third Thatcher Term' memorandum, it is not hard to discern why he was out of favour with the government. The memorandum was something of a jeremiad, which opened by lamenting that 'Things are not going well'. Whereas the heroic 'Thatcherites' of the mid-1970s had been prepared to 'think the unthinkable', now Sherman felt that the government discouraged critical enquiry, 'treat[ing] criticism of the status quo as heterodoxy'. This blinkeredness arose, Sherman alleged, from 'the excessive presumption of economists', who had encouraged the 'apotheosis of Adam Smith' into a 'total vision of society'.[120] He believed that 'neo-Smithian or Friedmanite utopianism', just like 'socialist-butskellite utopianism', violated the Tory's traditional awareness of the

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[118] Cover note by 'A' to Brian Griffiths, attached to Sherman, 'Quest for Common Ground', TP, THCR 2/6/4/99. I am grateful to Andrew Riley for his help in identifying the author.

[119] Whittingdale note to Thatcher, 3 November 1989 [with Margaret Thatcher's annotation].

[120] Sherman, 'Strategies for a Third Thatcher Term'. In fact, historians of political thought have more recently stressed how Smith was by no means a proto-neoclassical economist. Rather, his concept of the 'invisible hand' rested upon a moral order of virtuous sociability. See Keith Tribe, 'Adam Smith: Critical Theorist?', *Journal of Economic Literature* 37 (1999), pp.609-32.

inescapable partiality of human knowledge.[121] Whereas, during his time at the CPS, Sherman had sought to integrate market economics into a broader '*Weltanschauung*' or 'cosmology', he feared that certain influential thinkers in Thatcher's orbit were inclined to economic reductionism. Drawing upon contemporary political science, these thinkers tended to, in Sherman's words, downplay 'the formative influence of politicians', treating them as 'neutral transmission belts for interests'.[122] Although he did not state it explicitly, one can recognize in hindsight that Sherman's animus was incited by the application of public choice theories, which, in extending economic modes of reasoning into the political sphere, sidelined the irrational, spiritual aspects of political leadership. While he displayed some circumspection in 1986, by 1989 he openly deprecated the chief culprits: 'silly Sam' [Brittan] and the 'spoiled child' Nigel Lawson. Indeed, his invective against Lawson was especially vituperative. He wrote to Thatcher, following Lawson's resignation, claiming that 'John Hoskyns and I developed doubts about Nigel very early'. His intellectual laziness and arrogance, Sherman claimed, was manifested in a failure to appreciate the complexity of political and economic truth in changing circumstances.[123] While the immediate circumstances of Lawson's resignation - a dispute with Thatcher over the influence of her economic advisor, Alan Waters - incited Sherman's wrath, he was correct to infer that they possessed fundamentally different outlooks *vis-à-vis* the nature of political change.

Sherman spent his time pondering three major questions:

1. *the problem of ensuring permanent support from the masses of people for a social order in which inequality and uncertainty play a large and crucial part;*

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[121] Sherman, 'Strategies for a Third Thatcher Term'. Sherman's critique of intellectual perfectionism bore some similarity to the arguments of his political antagonist Sir Ian Gilmour. See Ian Gilmour, *Dancing with Dogma: Britain under Thatcherism* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

[122] Sherman, 'Quest for Common Ground'.

[123] Alfred Sherman memorandum, 'Nigel Lawson and the Witch-Hunt Against Alan', 10 November 1989, TP, THCR 2/6/4/99.

2. to what extent our society and culture can survive the decline of
   supernatural religion;

3. the extent to which we are able to reshape our society.[124]

Lawson and Brittan would probably contest Sherman's claim that the first and third of these were 'exoeconomic matters', viewing wider share ownership, for example, as a means of securing support for the market system and restructuring social constituencies. However, whereas their neo-liberal reasoning modelled individuals as rational actors whose behaviour was predictable, Sherman insisted that historical development was 'stochastic'; in other words, it was impossible to predict.[125] Indeed, this arbitrariness of human existence was liable, Sherman claimed, to generate 'angst' and 'generalized free-floating hostility' amongst the public. Whereas this 'angst' had traditionally been assuaged through organized religion, Sherman argued that it was becoming unaccommodated in the increasingly secularized and atomized society of the late 1980s. 'Live Aid, Band Aid, [and] Hands Across America reflect real yearnings among people', he stressed, for moral uplift.[126] However, Sherman's vision of an idealistic, quasi-religious Toryism differed markedly from what he called the 'cant' of those who, informed by marketing research, contended that the Conservatives should adopt a 'more caring image'.[127]

While the government laid far-reaching plans to extend choice and competition in education and health, Sherman was busy organizing his own review of social policy. He presented his report, which he sent to Downing Street in December 1988, as the beginning of a new effort to establish 'common ground' across British society. In this vein, he had engaged in discussions with three experts on state welfare from different political backgrounds, namely Frank Field, the

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[124] Alfred Sherman, 'Conservatism and neo-conservatism under Marxism's shadow', undated, TP, THCR 2/6/3/156.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Sherman, 'Strategies for a Third Thatcher Term'.

[127] Ibid. He singled out 'the TRGLodytes, the Bakers, Heseltines, Hurds and Pyms' as the worst offenders in this respect.

Labour Member of Parliament for Birkenhead and former director of the Child Poverty Action Group; Ralf Dahrendorf, the eminent liberal sociologist; and Ben Pimlott, historian of the Labour Party.[128] The extent of these interlocutors' input is unclear. It might be more realistic to view the report as a rehearsal of many of Sherman's longstanding preoccupations. However, it does reveal the degree to which Sherman's perspective on social problems and how to remedy them differed from the approach of Thatcher's third government. Indeed, the government's reforms were largely irrelevant in Sherman's mind, given his conviction that social problems were essentially 'spiritual problems, embodied in total behaviour, rather than basically institutional problems'.[129] This outlook derived from his most fundamental intellectual conviction. Given that human behaviour was, from his perspective, moulded by habitual values and practices,[130] rather than determined by anterior stimulants or incentives, the *only* means to alter behaviour was by changing people's mindsets *prior* to any material reforms.

His report on social policy was concerned, therefore, predominantly with the moral condition of the public, which he believed to be degenerating rapidly. In his mind, health and educational inequalities were not the result of institutional failings, but rather of the increasingly pathological culture of the lower classes.[131] Alcoholism, crime and delinquency, 'sexual promiscuity leading to a breakdown in family life', the 'decanting' of urban populations to New Towns and their concomitant 'replacement' by alien unskilled immigrants had all culminated, in Sherman's jaundiced view, in the emergence of an 'underclass'.[132] Although he understood this social sub-stratum to be characterized by welfare-dependency,

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[128] Sherman, 'Quest for Common Ground'.

[129] Alfred Sherman, 'Politics, Economics, Ethics and Christianity in Our Times, Speech notes for the Prime Minister, 16 April 1986, TP, THCR 2/6/3/156.

[130] 'We act within a framework of ideas and beliefs which we inherit': Sherman, 'Conservatism and neo-conservatism'.

[131] Alfred Sherman report, '"The Lancet" allowed to get away with anti-Government propaganda', 5 October 1986, TP, THCR 2/6/3/156.

[132] Sherman, 'Politics, Economics, Ethics'; Sherman, 'Quest for Common Ground'.

Sherman did not believe disincentives from state benefits to be the *cause* of its emergence. Rather, the existence of a '*welfariat*' and its social dislocation were symptomatic of a wider social disintegration deriving from the erosion of traditional values and social relationships.

The government's preoccupation with microeconomic reform derived from a completely different mindset to that of Sherman. While the former increasingly thought in terms of material incentives operating upon individual rational actors, the latter hypothesized in idealist, almost romantic, terms regarding the health of the body politic, a unitary social organism. Sherman was fearful of what he identified as the corrosive potential of alien, non-traditional *ideas* and beliefs upon the social fabric. Traditional familial and parochial relationships continued, in spite of the Thatcher governments' economic reforms, to be undermined, he argued, by the 'Marxification of the stock of ideas' and 'economisation' of politics, which infected society with materialism and secularism.[133] Rolling back the frontiers of the state did not, from Sherman's perspective remove the threat of 'socialism' at the ideological level. For example, he identified the 'campaign against "heterosexism"' of certain Labour councils as a further solvent of customary social relationships.[134] Alternative lifestyles and freedom of choice in the social sphere were abhorrent to Sherman's philosophy, which sought to uphold a unitary 'common cosmology' within the nation-state.[135] While he accepted that he had consistently advocated certain liberal economic ideas, he considered them to be conceptually 'adjacent' to his broader philosophy, which he termed 'Neoconservatism'.[136] His 'disengagement economics' were conceived as a means of removing the distorting influence of state bureaucracy and permitting the efflorescence of customary civil associations.[137] However, he felt

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[133] Sherman, 'Conservatism and neo-conservatism'.

[134] Sherman, 'Strategies for a Third Thatcher Term'.

[135] Sherman, 'Conservatism and neo-conservatism'.

[136] Ibid. I employ Michael Freeden's terminology of 'core' and 'adjacent' concepts, outlined in *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

[137] For an argument that British Conservatism has been historically defined by its attention the health of agencies of civil society, rather than any definitive 'theory of state', see E. H. H. Green,

that a concomitant process of moralization should precede, or at least parallel, this liberalization. Given the moral neutrality of the free market, only religious and familial strictures could constrain humans' innate libertinism. Individuals needed to be acculturated, such that they employed their freedom to choose responsibly.

Evidently, Sherman lacked the government's faith that responsible behavioural patterns would proceed from freedom of choice *per se*. He considered ingrained habits to be stronger influences upon public behaviour than rational economic incentives. In fact, since his departure from the CPS, Sherman consistently denounced the most fundamental of the government's policies to extend freedom of choice. Plans for education and health reform were, he asserted, 'disaster areas'.[138] He also confessed his misgivings regarding the government's privatization strategy, which he argued needed rethinking *ab initio*.[139] Not only did the revenues permit the perpetuation of unnaturally high government expenditure, he also feared that granting the public stakes in 'monopolies and monopsonies' would only strengthen large corporations.[140] These objections were not just quibbles regarding policy detail; the extent and frequency of Sherman's critiques reflected a philosophical bifurcation between his political approach and that of the government. While Sherman sought to revive his romantic notion of an organic civil society, characterized by small enterprise and a common moral and religious 'cosmology', the government's reforms seemed increasingly driven by the interests of large financial and corporate institutions. Rather than nurturing knowledgeable and responsible entrepreneurial citizens, shareholders and savers were more likely to subscribe passively to

'Conservatism, the State, and Civil Society in the Twentieth Century', in *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.240-79.

[138] Ibid. Charles Moore has revealed the extent of tensions between Thatcher and Kenneth Baker regarding the centralizing implications of his education reforms. See Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Three*, pp.58-71.

[139] Alfred Sherman notes for Margaret Thatcher, 'Conditions for Economic and Political Survival, 1989-92', 3 November 1989, TP, THCR 2/6/4/99.

[140] Sherman, 'Conservatism and neo-conservatism'.

institutional investment products.[141] The consumerist society that had emerged by the late 1980s was culturally alien to the 'populist mood' Sherman had sought to foment. In his later years, Sherman lamented the marketing-driven politics of the Major and Blair governments, looking forward to a revival of the 'defensive and plebeian, anti-authority yet authoritarian' populism. He predicted a rising English nationalism, kindled by resentment of the privileged position of Scotland and Wales and hostile to European integration.[142]

One might be tempted, like Mrs Thatcher's Downing Street staff, to ignore Alfred Sherman. His patent bigotry could be taken to rule him out as a subject for serious historical study. However, this was a man who was once a leading influence upon Thatcher, Keith Joseph and their close associates in the CPS. As Sherman immodestly put it: 'Without me there would be no Centre, no Upminster, no Preston, no "Monetarism is not Enough"'.[143] While hyperbolic, there was an element of truth in his claim that the force of his personality had encouraged the movement for a new approach to Conservative politics. However, he felt that the Centre's influence had been weakened by the pusillanimity of Joseph, who was 'always looking over his shoulder at his colleagues: Prior, Gilmour, Willie, Maudling et al.' Moreover, when Hugh Thomas became chairman, he apparently laid down the principle that 'nothing should be said or published which even implied that any minister's policies were in error'.[144] This intolerance on Thomas's part might well have derived from a reluctance to permit open critical enquiry while the Conservatives were in

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[141] On the co-option of the Conservative governments' reforms by large financial institutions, see Amy Edwards, '"Financial Consumerism": Citizenship, Consumerism and Capital Ownership in the 1980s', *Contemporary British History* 31 (2017), pp.210-29; Emma Barnett, 'King Caz: Cazenove, Thatcherism, and the 1980s Financial Revolution', *Twentieth Century British History* 30 (2019), pp.108-31; Aled Davies, 'Pension Funds and the Politics of Ownership in Britain, c.1970-86', *Twentieth Century British History* 30 (2019), pp.81-107.

[142] Alfred Sherman and Mark Garnett, *Paradoxes of Power: Reflections on the Thatcher Interlude* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2005), pp.156-7.

[143] Sherman, 'Strategies for a Third Thatcher Term'.

[144] Ibid.

government. Yet, one should not overlook the fact that they possessed fundamentally different outlooks regarding the nature of governance.

5.4 Conclusion

The professionalization of the Conservative Party's public relations strategy marginalized amateur 'outriders' like Sherman and with them their ideals of a customary, hierarchical political culture. By 1987, those whom we might term marketeers, including supply-side economists and PR consultants, had gained the ascendancy in Conservative politics. In the process, they reframed once again politicians' conceptions of their relationship with the public. Sherman's ideal of a top-down process of political education, in which moralistic and didactic leadership defined the terms of public political debate appeared anachronistic in the age of the marketing consultant. Their research modelled British society not as an organic and coherent mass, united by shared customs and beliefs, but as a network of sub-cultural segments defined by individually self-defined lifestyle choices. What united individuals from the perspective of psychographic researchers was less a common British culture than a universal and instinctive aspiration to self-betterment, whether through 'inner-' or 'outer-directed' pathways. Psychographics, therefore, was analytically commensurable with neo-liberal economic theories. These market-based outlooks prescribed the granting of freedoms as the primary means of improving British society. For Sherman, the remoralization of public life by didactic leadership was a prerequisite for the attainment of a free society; however, the Thatcher governments increasingly came to regard free market economics sufficient *per se* as a means of political education. Freedom of choice, coupled with material incentives to make responsible choices, would open the pathway towards self-actualization.

Hence, at the same time as British society was becoming ever more pluralistic, Conservative politics retreated from the discussion of culture and values,

appealing instead to a universal 'instinct…for choice and independence'.[145] The aspiration, professed in the 1987 manifesto, to accomplish 'a profound and progressive social transformation' through 'popular capitalism' was expressed in grandiloquent terms.[146] However, in many respects, it marked a retreat from the New Right's earlier ambition to 'reverse the trend' of British social and cultural change. By this point, the Conservative Party, guided by the 'marketing concept', sought to satisfy prevailing popular desires for independence and choice, rather than convincing the public to think differently.[147] As we have seen, the party's increased reliance on marketing agencies derived not from a position of strength, but from a loss of confidence and certainty in the direction in which they were taking the country. Marketing agencies offered to clarify the evolving nature of 'Life in Britain', allowing the government to remain 'in touch' with the voters whose support they relied on. However, in embracing the consumer-led marketing process, the party largely abandoned an older ideal of political authority, the restitution of which had been the early New Right's primary *raison d'être*.

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[145] Conservative Party General Election Manifesto 1987, in Iain Dale (ed.) *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos, 1900-1997* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.313.

[146] Ibid., p.320.

[147] Scammell, *Consumer Democracy*, p.63.

Conclusion

The principal objective of this thesis has been to draw attention to what was perhaps the foremost preoccupation of the British New Right: how to ensure the prevalence of a climate of public opinion supportive of continued and effective Conservative government. The methodology of the thesis, taking the 'politics of support' as the starting point of analysis, has generated an impression of the Thatcher years that is rather different from conventional accounts. In spite of their hegemonic *aspirations*, the Thatcher governments were afflicted with an underlying uncertainty, ambivalence, and inconsistency in their conception of the nature of public opinion and their relationship to it. That is not to say that individual 'Thatcherites' did not possess firm convictions on these matters. Zealots and dogmatists were not hard to find; but they did not always agree with one another. Even *within* the New Right, multiple ideas and epistemologies were in play concurrently. Of course, the more granular the historical analysis, the more messy the resultant narrative is. Yet, the perspective taken by this thesis does raise the question of how far one can generalize regarding the existence of a coherent and consistent ideology of 'Thatcherism'.

Debates regarding political economy and public relations strategies were subsidiary to a more fundamental, if for the most part tacit, concern to restore and uphold the Conservative Party's authority over the public. Initially, the New Right sought to reaffirm, or resurrect, an old Tory notion of political education, in which political elites employed didactic rhetoric in order to invoke the deference of an organic body politic.[1] This outlook was founded on an idealist philosophy, in which voters' 'Mental Sets' were considered to be relatively autonomous of material

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[1] On this discursive approach to political education, see Andrew Jones and Michael Bentley, 'Salisbury and Baldwin' in Maurice Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays* (London: Cassell, 1978); Philip Williamson, 'The Doctrinal Politics of Stanley Baldwin', in Michael Bentley (ed.) *Public and Private Doctrine: Essays in British History Presented to Maurice Cowling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.181-208.

circumstances and processes. Advocates of this form of political education regained practical influence over the Conservative Party leadership in the wake of the apparent failure of the Heath government's alternative approach, which had rejected traditional assumptions about public educability in favour of a more pessimistic view shaped by social science. Through the vehicle of first the CPS and then the Policy Unit, the New Right advanced what might be described as the most ambitious public relations project in modern British political history, to 'reverse the trend' of public behaviour, marginalizing socialism and re-establishing a traditional political culture founded on the 'two-way movement of ideas' between the public and their leaders.[2] Changing the outlooks and habitual behavioural patterns of the public was considered to be a prerequisite for economic reform.

Although advocates of this approach to political education had some success in converting the Conservative Party while in opposition, they were frustrated and ultimately marginalized after the party entered government. John Hoskyns' lamentation that Whitehall hierarchies, which Thatcher and her ministers were unprepared to overhaul, obstructed holistic systems thinking was not necessarily inaccurate.[3] In fact, Thatcher, in spite of her initial deference to constitutional proprieties, gradually centralized power through her growing reliance on her Private Secretaries Charles Powell and Bernard Ingham, along with her economic adviser Alan Walters.[4] However, the barriers to a persuasion-led strategic approach to government were not purely institutional. Whereas Hoskyns had envisaged the unfolding of pre-prepared step-by-step plan, the reality of government was more akin to a series of Gramscian 'wars of movement'.[5] It was, in his words, like 'jumping

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[2] Ross McKibbin, 'A Brief Supremacy: The Fragmentation of the Two-Party System in British Politics, c.1950-2015', *Twentieth Century British History* 27 (2016), pp.450-69, at p.462.

[3] John Hoskyns, 'Conservatism is Not Enough', *Political Quarterly* 55 (1984), pp.3-16; John Hoskyns, *Just in Time: Inside the Thatcher Revolution* (London: Aurum Press, 2000), p.396.

[4] Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.405-7; Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography. Volume Three: Herself Alone* (London: Allen Lane, 2019), pp.16, 306-7, 339

[5] Keith Middlemas, *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 3. The End of the Postwar Era: Britain Since 1974* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p.279.

onto the footplate of a runaway train'.[6] As the government scrambled to address the appreciation of sterling and opposition from organized labour and local government, it became difficult to prime public opinion prior to often-improvised action. In such circumstances, it is unsurprising that the government became open to alternative means of shaping public behaviour and circumventing the opposition of vested interest groups, which did not require precursory persuasion.

Of course, Thatcher did not suddenly dismiss one set of advisers and replace them with another. However, in retrospect, there was a clear evolution in the government's emphasis from the mid-1980s from what David Willetts termed 'macro-conservatism' to a form of 'micro-conservatism', informed by neo-liberal economic theories and the research of marketing agencies.[7] Whereas 'macro-conservatives' had been preoccupied with inculcating and upholding overarching national values, 'micro-conservatives' were more concerned with relationships between individuals and networks of individuals.[8] Willetts, who was Director of Studies at the CPS from 1987 to 1992, lampooned those Conservatives who retained a 'macro' perspective as 'romantic' and 'elegiac'. If the party resembled 'the political branch of the society for the preservation of ancient monuments', treating the nation like a 'monastic order writ large', Willetts feared they would lose their connection with the realities of modern life in Britain.[9] Public choice theory and political marketing offered an alternative to pontificating: a means of conducting politics that purportedly worked with the grain of human nature.

Certainly, the later Thatcher and Major governments were less overtly moralistic in their public relations approach than the early New Right had advocated. One might infer that Conservatives had reconciled themselves to an undeferential and instrumental electorate. But while the party's growing recourse to marketing

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[6] Policy Unit paper on 'Long campaign, first draft', 5 November 1979, The Papers of Sir John Hoskyns, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, HOSK 2/34.
[7] David Willetts, *Modern Conservatism* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp.105-6.
[8] Madsen Pirie, *Micropolitics* (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1988), pp.129, 210-11.
[9] Willetts, *Modern Conservatism*, pp.99-100, 181.

research, which segmented the public according to 'lifestyle', played a part in undermining notions of a unitary body politic, this did not necessarily preclude a continued agenda of political education. Political authority was not so much abandoned as recalibrated. The Thatcher governments retained a consistent ambition to instil 'responsible' and self-reliant behavioural patterns in the British public, but, by the second half of the 1980s, they sought to achieve this less through exhortation than through financial incentivization. Property ownership, rather than elite admonition, became the 'great teacher', in the words of John Moore.[10] Ironically, this strategy was founded upon the very sort of rationalistic epistemology that the early New Right had repudiated. Public choice theory in particular modelled individuals as rational actors motivated to maximize their 'rent' and 'utility'.[11] Whereas the Stepping Stones strategy had been predicated on the idea that transforming Mental Sets was a prerequisite for material change, according to public choice theory the reverse was true. Moralization was, from the latter perspective, a function of, rather than a stimulus to, economic change.

Nevertheless, while the Thatcher governments remained committed to the ideal of a free, self-reliant society, they became, over time, less prescriptive *vis-à-vis* the form of this freedom. When Alfred Sherman, for instance, spoke of a 'free society', he referred to the freedom to act within traditional moral and institutional frameworks. Freedom, in his mind, was contingent upon the pre-existence of a shared framework of moral values and culture.[12] Thatcher might have hoped that a decline in state dependency would reinforce the bonds of family units and concomitantly traditional moral and cultural values.[13] However, in practice, the more

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[10] John Moore, *The Value of Ownership* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1986), p.3.

[11] For an unvarnished statement of this logic, see Madsen Pirie, *The Logic of Economics and its Implications for the Public Sector* (London: Adam Smith Institute, 1982), pp.27, 89.

[12] Alfred Sherman memorandum to CPS colleagues (Credo), 18 November 1974, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/111907 [hereafter MTFW], p.2.

[13] Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Neo-Liberalism and Morality in the Making of Thatcherite Social Policy', *Historical Journal* 55 (2012), pp.497-520; Ben Jackson, 'Free Markets and Feminism: The Neo-Liberal Defence of the Male Breadwinner Model in Britain, c.1980-1997', *Women's History Review* 28 (2019), pp.297-316, at pp.302-3.

flexible labour market cultivated by the governments' economic reforms militated against these traditionalist aspirations to some degree. Rather than 'reversing the trend', the Thatcher governments felt compelled to work with the grain of refractory social and economic trends, further disrupting established social relationships and patterns of responsibility. For instance, economic restructuring was accompanied, and perhaps facilitated, by the growth of in-work means-tested benefits.[14] Moreover, although Thatcher was reluctant to encourage mothers to enter the labour market, there was growing pressure within the party for the government to support female employment and the dual-earner family model.[15] Rolling back the state perhaps did more to accelerate social and cultural trends than it did to restore customary social relations. Indeed, with hindsight, rising individual autonomy and freedom of choice permitted a greater degree of self-fashioning and the growth of sub-cultures, rather than the reassertion of an overarching national culture.[16] Britain, it seemed, was becoming a 'post-traditional' society.[17]

The Thatcher governments were by no means ignorant of these social trends. In fact, their efforts to transfer governmental authority to the supply side partly reflected the weakening of the New Right's confidence that the public would defer traditional modes of authority.[18] Public choice theories, which offered a means of working with the grain of vested interests, proved enticing in a context of relentless

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[14] Peter Sloman, *Transfer State: The Idea of a Guaranteed Income and the Politics of Redistribution in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.173-4.

[15] Jackson, 'Free Markets and Feminism', pp.306; Miriam E. David, 'What Were the Lasting Effects of Thatcher's Legacy for Families in the UK?', in Stephen Farrall and Colin Hay (eds), *The Legacy of Thatcherism: Assessing and Exploring Thatcherite Social and Economic Policies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp.174-97. In 1994, the Major government pledged to support universal nursery education (p.308).

[16] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991); Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.104-5.

[17] Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p.2-3.

[18] For examples of this line of thinking, see Nigel Lawson note to John Hoskyns on the Westwell Report, 7 January 1982, Nigel Lawson Papers, Christ Church, Oxford, Lawson/1/1982; Shirley Robin Letwin and William Letwin, *Every Adult a Share-Owner: The Case for Universal Share Ownership* (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 1986), p.7.

wars of movement. Moreover, marketing agencies reinforced the impression of a politically apathetic, instrumental electorate, who were impervious to political education pitched at a cerebral level. The Conservative Party adjusted its public relations approach accordingly, cultivating its 'brand' in order to appeal to popular aspirations and subconscious desires. Political parties, no less than private sector enterprises, found themselves constrained by the imperatives of market competition, which inclined them to favour a more consumer-oriented strategy.[19] Some, predominantly younger, Conservatives, including members of the No Turning Back Group, celebrated the impression that individuals were no longer 'required to live and work according to standards and conditions which they would not, given any say in the matter, choose for themselves'.[20] But, rather than rejoicing at the extension of personal choice to the social sphere, most Conservatives were more likely to try to reconcile these expanding liberties with new means of instilling social disciplines and relationships of obligation. For example, the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, expressed enthusiasm for Neighbourhood Watch schemes - a means of sustaining social disciplines at the neighbourhood level without recourse to top-down exhortation.[21] Perceived necessity, as much as enthusiasm, led the Thatcher governments to reorient their moralizing project away from a restorative effort to revive an imagined national community. Instead, they sought to achieve discipline within a pluralistic and autonomous society, accepting the disaggregation of the national culture but trying to work through the networks of social relations that existed in modified form.

David Willetts presented this adaptation in positive terms in his book *Modern Conservatism* (1992). 'Individual communities', he argued, 'can be more intense and

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[19] Colin Hay, 'The Normalizing Role of Rationalist Assumptions in the Institutional Embedding of Neoliberalism', *Economy and Society* 33 (2004), pp.500-27, at p.502; Margaret Scammell, *Consumer Democracy: The Marketing of Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.16-17.
[20] The 'No Turning Back' Group of Conservative MPs, *Choice & Responsibility: The Enabling State* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1990), p.3.
[21] Chris Moores, 'Thatcher's Troops? Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and the Search for "Ordinary" Thatcherism in 1980s Britain', *Contemporary British History* 31 (2017), pp.230-55, at p.230.

demand more of their members if the demands of the national political culture are much looser'.[22] Following this logic, a free market and the absence of an overtly didactic government could *strengthen* social bonds while simultaneously permitting the disruption of customary social relationships. Such a philosophy was a world away from the prescriptive 'public doctrine' of the early New Right, which valued the preservation of established social relations as a salutary end in itself.[23] Willetts, by contrast, celebrated the proliferation of social networks regardless of their cultural form. He went so far as to describe modern Conservatism as a form of 'sophisticated liberalism', which sought to maintain social discipline within a context of inevitable social change.[24]

Indeed, following Sherman's departure, Lord Thomas quite self-consciously sought to move the CPS, the trail-blazing institution of the New Right, in a more liberal direction. In his 1988 annual review, Thomas suggested that the *raison d'être* of the Centre, which had been defined formerly as 'thinking the unthinkable', was now better described as 'voyaging over the horizon'.[25] While the CPS continued its efforts to expand the boundaries of political debate, it now did so in a fundamentally different sense. The 'unthinkable' ideas which Sherman sought to make thinkable were unthinkable not because they were unprecedented and beyond the future horizon, but because they had, in his mind, been proscribed by a left-liberal intellectual elite. If anything, the early CPS sought to rehabilitate attitudes and habits that they considered to belong to the national inheritance. Thomas, in contrast, embraced the disruption of established attitudes. He declared:

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[22] Willetts, *Modern Conservatism*, p.106. For a recent account of the proliferation of 'micro-communities' in late-twentieth century Britain, see Jon Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me? The Search for Community in Post-war England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.197-8, 234.

[23] See Maurice Cowling, 'The Present Position' in Maurice Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays* (London: Cassell, 1978), pp.1-24, at pp.15-16.

[24] Willetts, *Modern Conservatism*, p.182.

[25] Centre for Policy Studies, *The Power of Ideas: Annual Review 1988* (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 1988), Oxford, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive, PUB 110/3, p.5.

The country's attitudes and expectations have been changed beyond all recognition by such phenomena (scarcely conceivable ten years ago) as the spread of ownership and the fostering of a spirit of enterprise.[26]

In light of this, present political problems were, he argued, 'not necessarily susceptible to the received wisdom'. The CPS's role was therefore 'to re-examine…social, economic and political problems' *de novo*.[27] Instead of 'reversing the trend', the Centre was adapting to socio-economic and technological developments that, even if welcome, were not entirely within their control. Mirroring the language of psychographic research, Thomas spoke of removing 'obstructions' that constrained people's innate desire for independence and self-determination. The role of government was to unfetter these natural energies by permitting a 'wider diffusion of power and patronage'.[28] Rather than upholding traditional sources of authority, the CPS now urged the dissemination of power, delegating authority to individuals and enabling them to make their own choices.

Given the extent to which the New Right's moralizing agenda had fallen by the wayside by the late 1980s and given the marginalization of its leading exponents, one might question whether it makes any sense to talk of the later Thatcher governments as pursuing a 'New Right' agenda. As we have seen, the 'newness' of the New Right derived from its opposition to the rationalistic assumptions regarding public opinion prevalent in the Heath years. Indeed, the term New Right might be something of a misnomer, given the tendency's commitment to an old notion of political education.[29] This anti-rationalist epistemology – the quintessence of the New Right – did *not* prevail throughout Thatcher's years as prime minister. In many respects, the strategies of the later Thatcher years, which relied on material

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[26] Ibid., p.5.
[27] Ibid., pp.6-7.
[28] Ibid., p.6.
[29] Maurice Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.xxxii.

incentives to alter public behaviour, represented a complete reversal of the epistemology of the early New Right, which had stressed the necessity of public persuasion prior to material reform.

The extent to which the Conservative governments adapted their strategy reactively in light of social and economic change has been obscured perhaps by an excessive preoccupation with the personal attitudes of Margaret Thatcher herself. One should be particularly wary of assuming that the views expressed by Thatcher in the two volumes of her memoirs, *The Downing Street Years* (1993) and *The Path to Power* (1995), reflected the trajectory of the Conservative governments' policies.[30] The latter volume in particular contained many more or less veiled criticisms of the policies of her successor as Prime Minister, John Major. Thatcher's disquiet at Britain's accession to the Maastricht Treaty was the most incendiary example;[31] however, one might (tentatively) frame the discordance in broader philosophical terms. In the second part of *The Path to Power*, in which Thatcher adumbrated arguments about future policy, she returned to the moralization agenda she had developed with Keith Joseph in the 1970s. She invoked the American Catholic philosopher Michael Novak to support her argument that a 'free society' must be underpinned by 'internalized values' and a 'national ethos'.[32] Although she insisted she was 'not necessarily suggesting that only mass re-evangelization will pull Western society together', Thatcher was inclined to favour a hierarchical, didactic notion of leadership.[33] The 'national ethos' she envisaged was founded upon Christianity. In her memoirs, she returned to the sacerdotal outlook she had espoused in her St Lawrence Jewry speech of 1978, reproducing a passage stressing that 'Freedom will destroy itself if it is not exercised within some moral framework,

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[30] Thatcher employed Robin Harris as a ghostwriter for the volumes. On the often acrimonious writing process, see Moore, *Thatcher: Volume Three*, pp.751-6.

[31] Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), pp.470-507.

[32] Ibid., p.539.

[33] Ibid., p.554.

some body of shared beliefs'.[34] One might infer from Thatcher's memoirs that, far from believing that her governments had succeeded in reversing the trend of moral decline, she remained convinced that Britain was in need of 're-moralization'. For instance, she wrote with consternation about 'behavioural deterioration', which she connected to the growth of single parenthood.[35] Hence, although her governments had increasingly accommodated, and arguably reinforced, social trends towards individual autonomy, Thatcher *personally* retained much of the moralistic and prescriptive outlook that had animated the New Right in the 1970s.

John Major, by contrast, was much more at ease with the decline of a deferential political culture in Britain. He told Anthony Seldon of his profound distaste for 'the patronising way that the broad mass of the people were often treated by bureaucracy'.[36] His 'Citizen's Charter' was intended to rectify this, disseminating power to the consumers of public services and encouraging them to demand 'value for money' from the state. The implication was that government ought to be responsive to the desires and aspirations of the public, as well as vice versa. Although the Charter was widely mocked as a gimmick (the press lampooned the 'traffic cone hotline' for instance),[37] it should be considered significant, in retrospect, as an attempt to calibrate the Conservative Party's politics of support to the politics of power of the 1990s. In other words, the Citizen's Charter aimed to popularize the techniques of the so-called 'New Public Management' (NPM). The NPM policy framework, which encompassed the contracting out of services, expansion of competition, and regulation through performance targets, marked a continuation of many of the public choice-inspired reforms of the later Thatcher years and continued

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[34] Ibid., p.555. Reinforcing this sacerdotal turn, Thatcher quoted an extract from Pope John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus*, reflecting that 'Rome never seemed so close to Grantham' (p.556).

[35] Ibid., pp.548-50. In 1979, twelve per cent of families were single-parent. By 1990, this had risen to twenty per cent. See David, 'What Were the Lasting Effects of Thatcher's Legacy for Families in the UK?', p.181.

[36] Anthony Seldon, *Major: A Political Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), p.134.

[37] Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.448.

to inform the Blair governments into the new millennium.[38] This degree of policy continuity might imply that ideological imperatives - the fabled 'battle of ideas' - were not necessarily the primary determinants, or constraints, on political strategy in the late-twentieth century. While governments' actions changed the course of history, their unanticipated consequences and path dependence meant that 'reversing the trend' proved ultimately to be a chimerical aspiration.

Although Thatcher had hoped that economic liberalization could be accompanied by the restoration of a deferential political culture, her governments and their successors became reconciled to managing the public in a new way, working with the grain of the proliferating networks of a disaggregated society. Rod Rhodes theorized this as a transition from hierarchic 'government' to a more diffuse form of 'governance' whereby the state exercised control by indirect means, arbitrating and regulating networks of non-state actors.[39] The Thatcher governments' dismantling of corporatist structures and circumvention of producer groups' resistance undoubtedly reinforced the trend away from hierarchical government; however, one should not assume that this was the original intention of the British New Right. Paradoxically, in spite of modelling British decline in terms of complex networks and systems, Hoskyns and Strauss's Stepping Stones project constituted an attempt to restore a simpler model of top-down governmental control. Hoskyns frustration at his inability to instil a co-ordinated communications-led strategic approach culminated in his demands that power be centralized in a Prime Minister's Department. Even if later public-choice-inspired policies made a virtue of the disaggregation of power, it did seem often that the government was scrambling to adapt to the consequences of its own policies. Far from being a successful

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[38] Michael Moran, *The British Regulatory State: High Modernism and Hyper-Innovation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.2, 126-7.

[39] R. A. W. Rhodes, *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997).

'hegemonic project', the Thatcher government are perhaps better characterized as 'a monument to the law of unintended consequences'.[40]

In light of the research presented in this thesis, it may be necessary to reassess some of the conventional perspectives on British politics from the 1990s onwards. Narratives of ideological continuity, in which 'Thatcherism' became 'the ruling consensus of British government', perpetuated and extended by Thatcher's 'convinced disciples', John Major, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, reify the messy realities of government into a coherent ideology.[41] Moreover, they arguably underestimate the degree to which politicians were subject to, or perceived themselves as being subject to, common structural constraints beyond ideological consensus.[42] Both the Conservative and Labour parties wrestled with the question of how to influence public behaviour and generate mass support in the context of social disaggregation, international capital movements and the growing power of supra-national regulatory authorities. New Labour, like the Conservatives, sought means to achieve their ends while working with the grain of socio-economic trends, meanwhile employing marketing strategies to maximize their vote share.

Further research should consider the degree to which these approaches to public management, or the 'politics of support', were self-consciously discussed and debated within the parties. This is particularly urgent in relation to the post-Thatcher Conservative Party and its European neuroses. The antipathy of 'Eurosceptics' to the Maastricht Treaty and its successors should not be considered separately from questions about the nature of the Conservative Party's politics of support. Indeed, if anything, debates *vis-à-vis* European integration hinged on the same fundamental questions regarding the proper relationship between the government and the public

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[40] Ross McKibbin, 'A Brief Supremacy: The Fragmentation of the Two-Party System in British Politics, c.1950-2015', *Twentieth Century British History* 27 (2016), pp.450-69, at p.462.

[41] Simon Jenkins, *Thatcher & Sons: A Revolution in Three Acts* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), p.1. For a critique of this perspective, see Helen Thompson, 'The Thatcherite Economic Legacy', in Farrall and Hay (eds), *The Legacy of Thatcherism*, pp.34-68.

[42] For this argument in relation to New Labour, see Dan Corry, 'Labour and the Economy, 1997-2010: More than a Faustian Pact', *Political Quarterly* 81 (2010), pp.S123-S139.

that have been discussed in this thesis. Thatcher's anxiety, vented in her 1988 Bruges Speech, that the 'frontiers of the state' would be 'reimposed at a European level' is interpreted usually as a defence of neo-liberal reforms.[43] But, at the same time, the regulations of the European Community reinforced the prevailing trend in Britain towards 'governance' by codified rules and legal arbitration between multiple, non-hierarchical authorities – a trend for which, as we have seen, the Thatcher governments bore a degree of responsibility.[44] Conservative Euroscepticism, which sought to 'take back control' of policy to Westminster, was as much a reaction against this trend as it was a culmination of 'Thatcherite' ideology. Under the leadership of David Cameron, the party had continued to work with the trend, so to speak, seeking to nurture a 'responsibility revolution' indirectly through voluntary networks or 'social entrepreneurship'.[45] Post-Brexit, however, the Conservative Party leadership is seeking once again to disrupt established networks. As the government endeavours to escape constraints on the unilateral action of the executive it will have to wrestle with questions regarding the relationship between government and public opinion.[46] Proponents of Brexit frame the government's strategy as the establishment of clearer lines of democratic accountability and more responsive government; however, critics allege the emergence of a sinister majoritarian populism founded upon a flawed understanding of sovereignty.[47] Either way, it may

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[43] Margaret Thatcher, Speech to the College of Europe ('The Bruges Speech'), 20 September 1988, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107332.

[44] Moran, *The British Regulatory State*, pp.17-19; Hay, 'The Normalizing Role of Rationalist Assumptions', p502.

[45] Simon Lee, 'Introduction: David Cameron's Political Challenges', in Simon Lee and Matt Beech, *The Conservatives under David Cameron: Built to Last?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp.1-17, at pp.7, 9-10.

[46] Ferdinand Mount, 'Après Brexit', *London Review of Books* 42 (2020) [https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v42/n04/ferdinand-mount/apres-brexit, accessed 7 July 2020].

[47] For the former view, see Christopher Bickerton and Lee Jones, 'The EU's Democratic Deficit: Why Brexit is Essential for Restoring Popular Sovereignty' [https://www.thefullbrexit.com/the-eu-s-democratic-deficit, accessed 21 July 2020]. For the latter, see George Letsas, 'Brexit and the Constitution', *London Review of Books* 39 (2017) [https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v39/n06/george-letsas/brexit-and-the-constitution, accessed 14 July 2020]; Mount, 'Après Brexit'.

be that the government finds itself, like its predecessors, to be at the mercy of both events and an amorphous, capricious British public.

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