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The Gap In Reverse Communications In
British Politics.

By Carl Kenneth Allard, Jr.

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For my parents, and for my grandfather,
all of whom helped make it possible, and
also for Lycoming College where, "for one
bright, shining moment there was Camelot".

Author's Note

This paper is a result of some two years of research in both Great Britain and the United States. While studying at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland in 1967-68 I carried on a series of interviews with political figures in London and other places. During my senior year at Lycoming College the results of the research were amplified in a two semester course for honors in political science, resulting in the present paper. This thesis was defended successfully by the author on May 29, 1969, before the honors committee which subsequently awarded the grade of 'A' for both semesters.

In a work of this size many people assist the author in one way or another. Consequently I am deeply indebted to more people than could be listed here. The two people in the United Kingdom whose assistance was indispensable in obtaining interviews with Members of Parliament and party officials were the Baroness Elliot of Harwood and Mr. James Hoy, M.P. In the U.S. four people were mainly responsible for the final production of this thesis as members of the honors committee. They were Dr. David A. Cowell, Dr. Eloise Gompf, Dr. Loring B. Priest and Mr. Richard S. Rhone, all of whom deserve my deepest thanks for their patience and helpful suggestions which unquestionably improved the paper's quality.

In particular I would like to thank the chairman of that honors committee, Dr. David Cowell, for his pertinent guidance and good humored criticism which were of immeasurable assistance in the paper's preparation.

I, of course bear full responsibility for any remaining solecisms which may be found in the paper.

C.K.A.

Introduction

This paper is an analysis of the latest response of the British parliamentary system to one aspect of the historical problem of representative government. Democratic government bases its claim to legitimacy on its affiliation with the members of society as a whole, and traditionally has placed great emphasis on its ability to articulate the wishes and intentions of all its members. The affiliative claim is by far the more important. Governments of various descriptions have always prided themselves on their capacities to define what was their perception of the general will; but in a democracy the determination of the popular good is not left to the imaginations of an elite but is instead expressed directly in a variety of forms by the people themselves. Just what methods they take to express that will is a question of mechanics. In Great Britain the mechanics of democracy draw the populace as a whole into the electoral process only once in at least every five years. But once Election Day is over and a government is formed the great mass of people become passive political actors, leaving the business of governing to the gentlemen of Westminster Palace.

The act of election is not, of course, the only kind of political communication that operates in Britain. There is a broader base on which Parliament makes its claim to authority which involves a continuing awareness of what public opinion is saying. In addition to the party structures which extend down to the local level there are the Members of Parliament who are in touch with their constituencies on a daily basis in one form or another. They are a direct contact between the people and the politicians, or so it

is said. The communications process is also aided by the national and local media, to which the politicians have access. On the surface of it there would seem to be no absence of political communications in any direction; indeed the system incorporates and encourages institutionalized communications.

It is a principal thesis of this paper that the institutions designed to carry the communications burden from the people to their representatives in the parliamentary system are, in fact, inoperative in any meaningful sense. This breakdown in communications from the people to their representatives is what I have chosen to call the gap in reverse communications. It is assumed that the communications process from the political elite to the population is adequate for its purposes, since the national leadership has perceived little difficulty in communicating to the people by use of the mass media. It is also assumed that the predominant reason for the failure of the vast majority of the electorate to use the communications channels open to them can no longer be ascribed to the deference phenomenon once characteristic of British politics; now the silence is due to alienation. There has been increasing evidence of this change in popular attitude in recent years, some of which is explored in this paper; but the purpose of this study is not document the existence of the alienation, but to explore one facet of its impact upon the political system.

A secondary assumption in the preparation of this paper has been that both the gap in reverse communications and the alienation which attends it have been perceived as problems in modern British politics and that the parliamentary system is beginning to evolve a response to the former as part of its efforts to correct the latter. The work carried on by the Con-

servative party in making their local associations more representative of the community they seek to serve is the newest thrust of the movement toward reform. But the Conservative response carries with it a deeper significance than simply a re-organization of electoral technique, as important a development though that may be. The impetus of the movement for constituency reform represents a progression in British politics toward the application of more precise methods of representative efficiency, making use of statistical and sociological data in an organizational context. The use of opinion polls, constituency profiles and voter analyses has been a part of electoral techniques in both Britain and the United States for some years. But the Conservatives' efforts have been aimed at the organized, continuing use of these data by the local associations as a guideline to what they should be saying as well as the kind of members they should be attracting. By incorporating the diverse elements of the community into the party structure it is hoped that the leaders at the top will be made aware of what the people at the bottom are thinking. It is thus hoped that the party structure can be made a vehicle for the upward dissemination of opinion.

The information presented in the paper is largely a result of the author's own research conducted over nine months in the United Kingdom. It draws extensively upon a series of interviews with Members of Parliament, party officials in both Central Office and Transport House, and local party functionaries. The historical development of the problem is traced with the aid of the classic texts on British parliamentary theory and its representational aspects. For the modern perception of the problem reference will be made to newspapers, party documents and personal interviews, as well as scholarly publications.

The presentation itself is in three parts. An introductory section examines the perception of the communications gap from an historical context of British parliamentary theory. Included in this section is also an exposition of the contemporary perception of the gap as well as an evaluation of the new directions suggested by the contemporary commentators to solve the communications problem. The second section of the report is contained in a study of the methods which both major parties have used to improve their communications apparatus. The immediate origins of the need for such a response are examined, with particular attention being paid to the increasing use of scientific electoral techniques in these efforts. The section dealing with the Conservative party's response is of particular importance since a revised scheme of party organization based on the new techniques made its appearance in that party's Project '67; the objectives and methods of that program will be closely examined with special emphasis placed upon its primary effects on the local party units. The third major portion of the paper is a summary of the findings earlier presented and an analysis of their importance relative to Conservative electoral theory and practice, and to the problem of communications in British politics.

The frame of reference that will be followed is one which is relevant to the evolving concepts of British representational theory as they have been practiced in modern British political history. In tracing the development of both the theory and the practice I am concerned with showing the Conservative response as another link in that evolutionary chain. The paper should be read with that idea firmly in mind.

Chapter One

Historical Perspectives Of
The
Communications Gap

Certainly, Gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinions high respect; their business unremitting attention... But his unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living....

Edmund Burke

Historical Perspectives of the Communications Gap

The gap in reverse communications in British politics is the political stepchild of a long historical and cultural tradition, one which antedates not only the rise of political parties, but the parliamentary system itself. The ideas of Bagehot, of Mill, and of Burke gained currency only because they were an attempt to accommodate old political norms to new social realities. Each man wrote perceptively about the society of his own day, analyzing its beliefs and institutions in the light of those observations. All three were content to leave some things as they found them, but what is more to the point is that they were also determined to change certain facets of the political super-structure in order to make them more adaptable to the larger social context in which they had their meaning. This long tradition of adaptation persists in modern British politics in a variety of forms, some institutionalized and some not. It denotes an attitude toward government and society and history by the individual - particularly in his relation to all three.

It can hardly be surprising, then, to find that this attitude is itself basic to the principles of the British constitution. That body of doctrine exists as the political expression of a national turn of mind; consequently the two share a set of common characteristics. Both are pragmatic and evolutionary. Change dictates the need for evolution, but experience suggests a certain way of going about it; there is a concern that change be shaped and controlled with a respect for the past as well as a

certain attentiveness for the present. In one sense this is the real meaning of what Bagehot called the deferential society: what is being deferred to are the institutions and ideas of the past, since it is assumed that there was good and sufficient reason for their creation in the first place. This deferential attitude does not, of course, explain the tradition so endemic to British political life, but it does suggest a reason for it.

Traditionally the political communications gap had its existence in an institution and its expression in an idea. Simply put, the gap in reverse communications existed because of the wider gap which was prevalent in political representation. If someone is excluded from the political process, whatever the reason may be, it is hardly likely that the political institutions will solicit his opinions, much less listen to them. England in the eighteenth century was a highly stratified society which, to paraphrase Anthony Sampson, was composed of two parts: the landed gentry and all the rest. This was government by the few for the many, except that the many had very little to say about it since they lacked the franchise. Government was the preserve of a coterie of wealthy landowners and aristocrats who ruled both because they were wealthy and because they were aristocrats. As the beneficiaries of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, theirs was an inheritance of a system of power relationships which posited a highly developed and elitist form of government. Of that form of government a modern commentator has written:

Traditionally the government of England was not in the hands of 'the people', but rather in the hands of the Crown, advised in its work by Parliaments controlled by small groups of aristocrats and wealthy landowners. 1

The upper class not only had representation it had control, and government was merely the instrument used for the preservation of its own interests.

That the great mass of the people were alienated from the centers of influence was only a reflection of the structuring of society at large. Society was stratified in accordance with a hierarchy of values which placed ownership of land at the top and manual labor somewhere near the bottom. The theoretical justification for the status quo held that only the landed interests were capable of governing since only they had a stake in it. Similarly they were the only ones who enjoyed either the leisure or the training necessary to govern. At the head of society stood the monarchy as Chief Representatives of all the people, the precedents of Cromwell and 1688 notwithstanding. The Member of Parliament owed his ultimate allegiance to the Sovereign, regardless of differences on given issues, and he viewed himself as entirely subordinate to that authority. This was because,

... the role of the Member of Parliament was what it had been in Medieval theory... M.P.s were delegates or attorneys for their constituencies and their function... was to bind their constituencies to make good the grants of supply to H.M. And in practice they were preoccupied with local and special interests. 2

Neither Parliament nor its members had as yet come into their own.

But with the progress of the eighteenth century and the attrition of power from Whitehall to Westminster Parliament became the representative of the national interest. Parliament still represented the landed gentry over all, but because he was now an articulator of the national interest the Member of Parliament now had to devote himself to less parochial points of view than had formerly been the case. What was good for Shropshire might or might not be good for Britain; it was now up to the Member for Shropshire to place his constituency's interests in their proper per-

spective with respect to what was increasingly viewed as an organic society.

From this pattern of representation came the classical model of parliamentary representational theory, best articulated by Edmund Burke. The importance of Parliament as representative of the whole dictated the need not only for a certain type of Member, but also a particular bent of mind. Since that elected official should come by birth from the governing classes, it was only natural that his function should be such as to make best use of his faculties of reason. Nothing should prevent him from discharging his duty to the country as a whole according to his highest inclinations. The classical articulation of the classical model came from Burke himself:

Your representative owes you, not only his industry, but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion. 3

In its highest form the classical model treated the Member of Parliament as an objective statesman rendering impartial decisions, motivated only by the very highest of sentiments. There is no doubt that Burke was speaking for a great many of his peers when he made that speech in Bristol, for in one form or another his views exerted great influence, not only during the final quarter of the eighteenth century, but for the first half of the nineteenth as well.

The reality of the classical model was considerably less high minded than Burke suggested. In a society which accepted the legitimacy of corporate interests it was natural that the Member of Parliament should be a broker of those interests and a spokesman for them as well. The constituencies tended to represent a few influential members of the gentry as well

as some lesser lights and the electoral process within those constituencies resembled a rather discreet auction. The rotten boroughs gained a certain well deserved notoriety, but they were in many ways typical of the larger situation. In a constituency where one influential notable had considerable means his vote could be the only one worth having, the corollary being, of course, that his voice was the only one worth representing.

The communications process within such a system was quite simple: it involved listening to the purveyors of influence, both within a constituency and outside it. Professor Samuel H. Beer has pointed out that there were certain well defined channels of communication for the privileged interests to use that went beyond the limits of any one constituency.

... petitions and other expressions of public opinion outside Parliament were normally expected to come from such bodies as the municipal corporations, the universities, deans and chapters of cathedrals, magistrates and grand juries at quarter sessions and assizes. But so long as the interested groups proceeded through such legitimate and restricted channels, they were given a generous role in government. 4

These same interests were also privileged to have direct representation in the House of Lords in the unlikely event that their welfare should be overlooked for lack of exposure. Consequently the town corporations, the nobility and the wealthy were able to make their voice and their influence felt in government.

Naturally enough this kind of representation led to problems if you were neither incorporated, noble nor wealthy. If a group within a constituency did not have the ear of their Member, then, assuming someone else did, the Burkean theory of representative government was capable of infinite per-

Part Two

In the nineteenth century the British political system had to accommodate itself with the ideas of democracy that were an adjunct of the Industrial Revolution. The structure of the classical model, as has been seen, was not oriented toward popular consultation; the efforts to move it in that direction were at the center of much of the political debate which went on during the period. Benjamin Disraeli summed up much of the problem in these words:

In a progressive country change is a constant, and the great question is not whether you should resist change which is inevitable, but whether that change should be carried out in deference to the manners, the customs, the laws and the traditions of the people. 6

The idea that government cannot afford to be static in an age of change was a great response by the parliamentary system to the dynamics of political evolution.

The social forces which forced the system to make basic changes within itself need not be catalogued here. It is sufficient to note that the rising middle class, together with elements of the working classes, succeeded in obtaining the franchise in a series of electoral reforms which began in 1832 and which were not actually completed before 1914. The Reform of 1832 in many ways is the most important reform of all, if for no other reason than that it was the first. Other reforms followed on its heels that were part of a general levelling process which took place throughout British politics during the period, since the ruling class was forced to make further concessions once they had enfranchised another class with different inter-

ists. The result of these reforms was to create a new balance of power, "between the landed interest and the urban middle class" 7 The ruling class had not surrendered - Sir Ivor Jennings points out that 1832 increased the electorate only from 3.1 per cent to 4.7 percent - but the pattern of representation was changing because some one else was doing the representing. 8

The political history of the second quarter of the nineteenth century is one of dislocation and factionalism as the parliamentary system tried to adapt itself to the new pattern of representation. As Parliament went on with its levelling activities in some confusion but with firm intent 9 there came, "A message delivered in a tone which seemed to brush aside all doubt for the future, that the independence of the individual in the State was an eternal verity reposing on the foundations of reason" 10 John Stuart Mill had arrived on the scene, a fortunate happenstance as the prevalent ideologies of the day bore little resemblance to reality.

Mill's ideas were not, of course, entirely his own creation. They sprang in part from the French Revolution and from the head of that greatest of Utilitarians, Jeremy Bentham. In his writings Mill stressed the absolute primacy of the individual - any individual regardless of his station in life. In On Liberty Mill explored the nature of the individual in society, particularly in respect to the new situation in which, "each was governed by all the rest". It was imperative that each individual be treated as something of an autonomous moral entity; his personal sphere was inviolate and the only form of regulation which was proper was that which governed social interaction from man to man. He went farther in Representative Government: "if 'each is the only safe guardian of his own rights and interests', it is clear that all ought to have a share in the sovereign

power. But as the whole cannot take part personally in public affairs, it follows that the ideal type of government is representative government "11 The moral quality of that government was also suggested:

The most perfect pleasures being those which are the most elevated in their nature, the path which the individual must take to attain his own happiness is that which leads to the welfare of the human race. In this sense personal happiness can only be fully realized in the general welfare, and egoism to become a reality must identify itself with altruism. 12

In the latter half of the nineteenth century it was Mill who would replace Burke: the classical model was being overshadowed by the liberal one.

Egoism became identified with reality in the person of Benjamin Disraeli. It was he who presided over the Conservative party's conversion to what is commonly called "popular Toryism". Since the Reform Bill of 1832 the object of both parties had been the allegiance of the newly enfranchised classes. It became clear to Disraeli that if the Tory party were to capture the support of the Whiggish urban voters, then steps had to be taken to encourage some mutual identification of interests. The philosophical turn in British politics toward the representation of individuals as advocated by Mill has already been noted. The need for a receptiveness to that kind of influence could be conveniently dealt with from the top: in one sense it was only a public relations feat. But what was more basic was the need to reach the electorate on their home grounds. Consequently the Reform of 1832 was the signal for an intense preoccupation of the parties with their electoral registers.

... registration became...a gap through which the parties, hitherto confined to Parliament, made their way into the

constituencies and gradually covered the whole country with the networks of their organizations. 13

The importance of that development should not be missed for it shows the nature of the initial response of the parliamentary system to the pressures with which it was forced to deal. Beer points out that at this time, "party, as a source of policy, was weak", and that the most important political action sources were the reformist pressure groups 14 With the franchise being what it was, things could hardly have been any other way. The hitherto restricted arena of legitimate political communication had been broken open and it became the task of the parties to find a way to pick up the pieces. In the years following 1832 both parties set up registration societies for the express purpose of identifying and encouraging those electors who were thought sympathetic to the party's views. As has been noted above, the Liberals were the first to make great use of those associations. The Conservatives had them as well but they were mainly tools of the local gentry. They were, however, a first step toward the creation of the elaborate extra-parliamentary party which grew up after 1867 and which owed so much to the patronage of Disraeli.

Part Three

In addition to the problem of representing the masses and finding an organizational structure capable of soliciting votes and hearing opinions, the party organizations in and out of Parliament had to deal with the,

...Radical doctrines concerning governments by the majority. The norm of 'majority rule' on the one hand gives special importance to the views of the peripheral public; on the

other, it can be used to ignore criticism from minorities. 15

It followed that if the majority was sovereign then prudence dictated that the majority must of necessity be an educated one, insofar as possible. Political education, then, had to be a goal of the party establishments. The question was, how to go about it? The Liberals had their Caucus and tried to promote a kind of democratic representation within their organization in Parliament. The Tories had very little besides their old registration societies. Their National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations was not equipped to enroll them masses let alone educate them. The local associations within the parent body were merely, "voluntary combinations of partisans, devoid of representational character, modelled on the usual pattern of Registration Societies" 16 Disraeli, in the years just before 1867 and thereafter, saw the reorganization of the associations as one of the most important aspects of his drive to make the Conservatives a potent electoral force against the Liberals. It made sense to ally the parliamentary party with the issues that attracted the sympathy of the masses, but Disraeli reasoned that it was at least as important to rid the local associations of their reactionary stigma.

To accomplish that end Disraeli appointed Sir John Gorst. After 1867 it was Gorst's job to provide the party with an organization capable of contesting every seat in Britain, a task made all the more urgent by the fact that the electorate had risen to 8.5 per cent of the population 17 To build the local associations Gorst deliberately sought out what Ostrogorski called 'energetic men of Tory views', encouraging them to participate in the party affairs in their own localities. By involving these talented people in the local parties it was possible to evolve a new leadership from the ground up. In those areas where there were no associations the new breed

would start them. Due to Gorst's efforts in this area there was created a Tory party at the local level which tended to be representative of the people who supported it, and although it was a reform which was not carried out without some difficulty, the precedent of wide-spread voter involvement had been set.

As a direct result of Disraeli's efforts the Conservative party made some effort to accommodate itself with the classes whose interests it had formerly been indifferent to, but whose support it now needed. The party in Parliament would seek to identify itself with the issues that tended to draw the support of the urban voter blocs, while the party at the local level would carry forward the Tory banner by educating and involving the masses directly in party affairs. Within the Conservative party weak channels of communication from the electoral associations to the parliamentary party were being developed. Such was the contribution of 'popular Toryism'.

Part Four

In the years after Disraeli the Conservatives tried to make that popular Toryism relevant to the people at large. Their excesses in doing so were remarkable. What was embraced was the view that society as a whole was made up of different classes whose aims were different but complementary. The local associations continued to grow and prosper and the electoral results showed their effectiveness. The local associations of both parties were not, however, the only political action groups set up within the constituencies. Other organizations were established along with the local associations which had a different function but the same purpose - electoral

aggrandizement.

It will be recalled from the last section that the democratization of the local Conservative associations had been charged to Sir John Gorst. Part of his plan for the integration of the working classes into the affairs of the local parties involved the creation, in November of 1867, of the National Union of Conservative Working-Men's Associations. The idea of political associations growing out of social surroundings was one which had wide notoriety at the time. An earlier non-partisan association of working class clubs had been funded by wealthy patrons for the purpose of enlightening the masses. Both parties were quick to seize upon the scheme and exploit it for their own ends.

The Conservatives lost no time in enrolling as many workers into the local clubs as were misguided enough to be deceived by such an obvious ploy. Although the local clubs existed side by side with the constituency associations they were not, of course, granted any say in the administration of the local party. The working class members of the clubs were no longer just token representatives of their class, they were an independent political force. As such they were to be coddled, but only at arm's length. It was not long before these clubs ran into trouble with the facts of social life in Victorian England.

The ways of English society, and particularly the Tory section of it, not being favorable to daily intercourse between men of different classes on a footing of equality, the popular element was left to itself in those clubs. 19

That basic contradiction between representing the lower classes while trying desperately not to embrace them at close range should have been readily

apparent to the Tory leadership, and indeed Disraeli himself emerged briefly from semi-retirement to denounce the whole thing at a speech in Glasgow in 1873. He thought that the program as it had developed was injurious to his own theories about the organic state, but the local organizers, "evidently thought that theory was one thing and practice another, that the best way of imparting cohesion to the electoral forces was to arrange the voters in the order in which they were grouped in daily life, where classes were very deeply divided " 20

It is worth noting that the non-partisan Union of Workingmen's Clubs and Institutes, which gave birth to the idea of such clubs, was stifled for much the same reasons. They too ran into the same problems of social integration as the Conservative clubs. This was especially significant since it showed that social interaction was difficult even without a political theme given the state of society. Even so, the politicians were quick to seize upon the clubs as a possible forum for political education of the masses; political education was not, after all, a matter to be left to disinterested amateurs. The combination of social incompatibility and political exploitation soon finished the idea of non-partisan clubs.

Political education had become a pseudonym for the distribution of party propaganda. Real education in politics for the masses, as it was perceived by the party system in the years after 1867, was both a social and an administrative impossibility. The primary reason for the failure of the extra-parliamentary associations to assimilate members of the working classes into their structures was that the nature of a stratified society would not permit it. Class differences would not be ameliorated by a series of ephemeral contacts between workers and local notables. From that basic mis-

conception came the party's efforts to provide the illusion but not the substance of representational reform within the local association hierarchies. In so doing the party machine over-reacted to its earlier snobbery and carried out its plunge into the politics of democracy with a touching disregard for reality. With so wide a gulf between perception and reality it is doubtful that any truly democratic organization could have been set up to attract the loyalty of the masses. The parliamentary system, having been strained almost to the breaking point to concede representation to the great body of the people, went too far in the opposite direction in its attempts to encourage popular allegiance. It remained for Walter Bagehot to clear up the misconception.

Bagehot's contribution to British political thought was less ideological than Mill's. Written in 1867, The English Constitution was a clear exposition of the idea that English political principles and practice rested "the deferential society". His assumption was that the common mass of the people were "ignorant but respectful"; consequently they could be appealed to in a number of ways, provided that care was taken not to expect too much of them. The solution was to simplify truth and get as much of it over to the electorate as they could bear.

English society was admirably well equipped to accomplish that task in Bagehot's view, and he was concerned with clarifying the ruling class perception of its own role in that context. It was sufficient for the government to keep the people's allegiance by a reliance on the dignified parts of government, by which he meant the "theatrical show" associated with government. The people knew little and cared less about the day to day

affairs of the "efficient parts of government". What did affect them was the primitive notion of the state, particularly as it was embodied in the monarchy. The pomp and glitter of that portion of government was at least apprehensible by the masses; they respected it naturally without knowing quite why. The substance of Bagehot's premise was that it was of little worth to attempt to command the intellects of men: far better not to command them at all if they could just be kept neutral and deferential. Once that was accomplished, presumably by the dignified parts of government, the rest would follow along.

The corollary that went with this approach had to do with the efficient part as well, involving the general theory of parliamentary representation and political communication. It posited not so much the hearing of public opinion as the shaping of it. The 'deferential norms' of the society were to be heavily relied upon to accomplish the task of political socialization from the top down as opposed to the Disraelian notions of upward socialization. The political elite, in order to lead, had to be the political elite, and, to complete the circle, their position as the elite meant that they could lead. The people were willing to accept strong personal leadership in the efficient parts of government because they identified strong personal leadership with the symbols of the dignified part of it. Bagehot himself expressed the importance of what might be termed the deference model of parliamentary representation:

... the mass of 'ten pound' householders did not really form their own opinions and did not exact of their representatives an obedience to those opinions; they were in fact guided in their judgment by the better educated classes, and gave those representatives much license. 21

How then did this differ from Burke? Had English political theory come full circle in the century between Burke and Bagehot? In a sense it had, but there is a more important sense in which it had not. There had been an advance in philosophical ideology which made possible the enfranchisement of the common man, a levelling process which was again advanced by the reforms of 1885, and which made the old idea of government as a holding company for the wealthy class obsolescent. There was the further concept of a party structure which attempted to cut across class differences to unite all segments of an interdependent society. Above all there was the theory of rational progress, so skillfully articulated by Disraeli. There was no way to repeal the nineteenth century and experience suggested that it would be unwise to try. The third quarter of the century did not see a reversion to the Burkean ideas of representation: it only looked that way.

Bagehot recognized that a form of democracy was there to stay; but he also recognized that there was a more important point - that it was English democracy that had arrived. There was certainly a need to make the crooked straight and the rough places plain, but what could never be forgotten or ignored was the strength of the larger heritage which still provided a constant reference point even in the midst of change. What the leaders of the parliamentary system had forgotten in the nineteenth century, and which Bagehot went to great pains to remind them of, were the thousand years of British history which were a far stronger agent of political socialization than any party organization could ever hope to be. Consequently the electorate, even the newly enfranchised parts of it, could still be reached in conventional ways simply by constructing a party machine which recognized the existence of those ancient social norms and acted accordingly. The

people wished to be represented, but they were content to be represented from a distance.

The history of English democracy was the compromise of old institutions with new realities. The non-communication so evident in the classical model had itself been indicative of the near feudal state which then existed. The pressures of the forced embrace with democracy had brought about a profusion of organization which resulted in the creation of an elaborate party apparatus outside Parliament which was geared not to political education but political electioneering. The original attempt to turn the parties into reciprocal means of education and information had been a failure in terms of the expected response by the masses, probably due to misconceptions by the leadership. With the growth of the extra-parliamentary parties there was a decline in the activities of the reform groups which had played so prominent a role in the individualistic politics of the Victorian era, and since the 1880's, "the parties with their growing research and publicity departments have become more and more the centers from which new ideas are propagated among the voters" 22 In the closing years of the century the idea of an institutionalized communications system still had some appeal, and it was for the political leadership to make the party structures amenable enough to public opinion to be influenced by it, but not swayed by it. 23

This, then, is the history of the justifications for the gap in reverse communications in British political life. It is represented in the progression from the classical model of representation through the liberal and ending with the deferential model, all of which were attempts to justify a particular relationship between government and individual. What emerged

from a century of conflict and experimentation was the idea that political representation was best achieved when government was in contact with people but slightly aloof from them as well. This concept with its obvious impact upon communications theory has persisted into modern British political life and plays an important part in the nature of the Conservative party's response.

See ibid., pp. 112, 113

Abstract and the Organization of Political Parties,

Footnotes

1. Richard Rose, Politics In England, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1964) p. 6
2. Samuel H. Beer, "The Representation of Interests in British Politics", American Political Science Review, (LI:3), 1957, p.616. Professor Beer's discussion of 'parliamentarism' in these pages is a particularly helpful one and I have drawn heavily from it in this section.
3. Peter G. Richards, Honourable Members, (London: Faber&Faber, Ltd., 1959) p. 159, citing "Speech To The Electors At Bristol" by Edmund Burke
4. Samuel H. Beer, op. cit., p. 617
5. P.G. Richards, op. cit., p. 161, citing Antony Henry, M.P.
6. Richard Rose, op. cit., p. 49-50, quoting Benjamin Disraeli
7. Sir William Ivor Jennings, Party Politics, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) vol. I p. 12
8. Ibid., p. 51-52
9. On this particular point see Jennings, op. cit., p. 12
10. Moisei Ostrogorski, Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964) p. 46-48
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 46-48
13. Ibid., p. 73
14. Samuel H. Beer, op. cit., p.638
15. Richard Rose, op. cit., p. 166
16. Moisei Ostrogorski, op. cit., p. 119
17. Sir William Ivor Jennings, op. cit., p. 55
18. Moisei Ostrogorski, op. cit., p. 123
19. Ibid., p. 122-123
20. Ibid.
21. Walter Bagehot, The English Constitution, (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), p.263

Footnotes

22. Samuel H. Beer, op. cit., p. 640
23. Ostrogorski felt that the action of institutionalizing patterns of communication was dangerous and self defeating, particularly in the English political context:
...But to enable the power of public opinion... to make itself felt, there must be complete freedom for opinion to manifest itself in many and varied forms; to come straight up to the doors of Parliament and for those who are in Parliament, the fewest possible impediments to the delicate task of catching the fluctuating views of the multitude. In interposing on behalf of opinion between it and Parliament... the Caucus hindered their power of reciprocal penetration. (op. cit., p. 318-319)

...a continuous two-way flow of information, horizontally and vertically; this is necessary if governors and governed take into account each other's behavior and their future relations.

Chapter Two

Contemporary Perception Of
The
Communications Gap

Government requires a continuous two-way flow of information, horizontally and vertically; this feedback is necessary if governors and governed are to take into account each other's behavior and adjust their future actions accordingly.

Richard Rose

Contemporary Perception of the Communications Gap

The separation of people and government which has characterized much of British political life finds modern expression in the parliamentary system in a variety of ways. It is, for example, understood that the Member of Parliament, while nominally responsible to the people who elect him, is a member of one party or another and as such is expected to adhere to party policy in the division lobbies. The parties themselves are thought to pay particular attention to the wants of the people who vote for them, yet the formulation of party policy takes place in an atmosphere which is almost totally devoid of popular involvement. Government itself is the government of all the people, yet it rarely comes into contact with any of them except when it wishes to license or to tax. And apart from these mechanical separations the powerful norms of British life reach out to enforce the separations imposed by the political institutions.

The nature of the gap between people and government is not, then, just confined to communications but in fact underlies much of the political climate. In recent years much attention has been given to the problem of popular exclusion from the political process since an increasing doubt has been thrown on the validity of quinquennial elections as the be-all and the end-all of democratic expression. However, little of this attention has been directed specifically at the communications problem but has instead taken other forms; consequently the communications gap has surfaced, but has been cloaked in such code words as alienation, distance and unre-

sponsiveness. Whatever the terminology, the problem is the same. What has been increasingly perceived is an interruption in the process of meaningful political contact between the electors and their representatives in the parliamentary system. Since it is the electorate which is either unwilling or unable to communicate with the politicians on a political level, the break is referred to as a gap in reverse communications.

It is assumed for the purposes of this study that political communications are those forms of contact between electors and representatives which take place on a policy level. If the 'demos' are to rule then presumably they must not only be able to speak, but also to speak on the substance of the policy. If the 'demos' choose representatives then they must be capable of speaking to them in this same level of substantive competence. It would seem to follow that an examination of the communications pattern of the British Member of Parliament is the first step in tracing the gap in reverse communications, and it is a study of that function which constitutes the first section of this chapter.

Part One

The British Member of Parliament is remarkably conscientious in his attempts to keep in close touch with his constituents. That he is able to do so at all is something of a minor triumph of the human spirit. None of the resources available to the average M.P. are of sufficient quality or quantity to make the job of communicating an easy one. The Palace of Westminster is not equipped with anything even remotely like sufficient of-

office space for the Members and the most that an M.P. can usually hope for is a desk in the library more or less to himself and perhaps a filing cabinet where he can keep his papers. He receives few allowances which would permit him to alleviate the situation; any office space or secretarial help which an M.P. has is paid for out of his own pocket, and it is by no means clear that his annual salary is sufficiently large as to make this expense a trifling one. In addition, Members of Parliament do not enjoy the franking privilege possessed by their legislative counterparts in the American Congress. Consequently one sees in the physical situation of the M.P. a certain insufficiency as far as communication facilities are concerned, the kind of disadvantage only overcome by the dutiful Member at some cost to himself in time, money and aggravation. This study it needs only to be men-

The communications which an M.P. receives from his constituents provide concrete evidence both of the Member's sincerity and of his inability to act as an effective communicator between people and government. In talk to M.P.'s about the volume of their mail one hears mentioned most often the figure of twenty or twenty-five letters per day or a composite weekly average of about one hundred and forty letters per week. This is no inconsiderable sum, but when one considers that most Members represent constituencies of fifty thousand people or more, it is clear that these letters do not of themselves constitute a democratic dialogue. An analysis of their content clearly shows that letters to Members of Parliament cannot be thought of as meaningful political contact in accordance with the definition of that term used earlier. Of the twenty or so letters which the M.P. receives on any given day, roughly half will be petitions for assistance

by constituents who are anxious to have personal grievances righted 1 These complaints usually involve matters such as housing (particularly with council houses) , pensions, national assistance or any other of a number of things having to do with the interaction of the welfare state and its citizens. The rest of the M.P.'s mail is divided between circulars from interest groups of all kinds as well as some few contacts which might possibly be called communication on the level of policy determination. It is clear that this last category is a miniscule one and except in times of crisis or heated debate it constitutes only a negligible proportion of the Member's mail.

The dispensation of the petitions for assistance has received some attention elsewhere 2 For the purposes of this study it needs only to be mentioned that the bulk of these requests are forwarded to the appropriate officials with a note from the Member asking for either a review of the case or for specialized information relevant to the particular grievance. While M.P.s are reluctant to use their 'influence' to extort special concessions from the bureaucracy, the whole process of this grievance machinery is adequately summed up in Peter Richards' phrase, "competition for government services". The competition takes up a good bit of the Member's time, and it does bring him into some contact with the people he represents; the contact, however, is not a political one since no ideas are being transmitted through the communications apparatus. Although the potential for that contact exists it is clear that letters to Members of Parliament do not serve as a political communications link between people and parliament 3

Letters are not the only form of contact which an M.P. has with his constituents. Of equal importance are the 'surgeries' which most Members hold in their constituencies on a regular basis. In an important survey of constituency surgeries Robert E. Dowse found that only 20.7 per cent of the Conservative M.P.s sampled did not hold regular surgeries; the corresponding figure for Labour M.P.s was 17.9 per cent.⁴ The surgery session takes place on a weekend in the Member's constituency and for several hours he sits and hears as many of his constituents as may drop in. The sessions are usually held in the local party's committee rooms and are normally advertised in advance. In this personal confrontation of M.P. and elector one might hope to find a way of bridging the reverse communications gap; surely the people must be able to get their views across to a man who would solicit their opinions in their own neighborhood, even if they would not take the trouble to write him a letter telling him what they think. However, the Dowse study reveals that there is a statistical set of proofs for what had previously been informed conjecture; that is, that the bulk of the surgery attendants are concerned with precisely the same kind of welfare requests that the great majority of the Member's correspondents are.

Dowse found that the two concerns most often expressed by surgery attendants were housing and pensions.⁵ The whole focus of the surgery seemed to be in its extension of the parliamentary grievance machinery to the local level. Perhaps for that reason the study found that Labour M.P.s valued the surgeries more than did the Conservatives because Labour supporters were alleged to have more difficulty writing letters and would, therefore, have more reason to make use of surgery sessions. The present study found that

most Members did in fact approach their surgery in much the same way as they approached their mail. One M.P. put it this way: "... there is very little the surgery does that could not be handled by letter". Most Members saw the surgery function as an overlap of their 'ombudsman' duties and usually expressed the belief that the surgery was more helpful than a letter only because of its face to face nature.

Opinion was divided on the surgery's efficacy as an information-gathering device. Some M.P.s, echoing Dowse's findings, found it helpful in getting a 'feel' of the constituency and its problems. Most of the Members felt that this was due to aspect of personal interaction, rather than to any inherent content of the problems which were discussed. Other M.P.s expressed a more aloof attitude toward the surgery, one Labour Member going so far as to say that surgery attendants tended to be "oddballs and bores who have ideological axes to grind"; consequently he felt that the surgery did not necessarily serve as a representative sampling of constituency opinion. A Conservative M.P., perhaps recalling Burke, thought surgeries a waste of time because he didn't particularly care what his constituents thought; what was important was what he thought and if his constituents did not like what he thought they could get rid of him. Generally speaking, however, a consensus seemed to be that surgeries were helpful in reassuring the electorate of the Member's occasional accessibility and in providing the M.P. with some idea of what people were saying as a kind of incidental reward. No one placed primacy on the surgery as a device for political contact, and few M.P.s would disagree with the statement made by one of their colleagues who said that, "the most significant part of the surgery is the

ad about it that goes in the newspaper".

After the media of letters and surgeries, the most often mentioned point of contact between representatives and electors in Britain is the local and, in some cases, the national press. Most cities in Britain are served by at least one local paper, local in the sense of municipal or regional. All areas, of course, have access to the national dailies such as The Times, The Guardian and the Daily Telegraph, just to cite examples of the 'quality' press. Most M.P.s have little difficulty in getting their names and sometimes their faces into the pages of the local papers, depending on their own initiative. Members of Parliament from some of the major cities, and particularly London, are at a real disadvantage since there the local press is indistinguishable from the national. The Member from a London or Manchester constituency finds that he cannot get 'local' coverage unless he is making national news.

It is difficult to see how the use of the media, and especially the newspapers, can be thought of as a possible channel of communications from the electors to their representatives. Precisely the opposite is true since the media serve mainly as a vehicle to transmit the views, to use Professor Richard C. Rose's terminology, of the national politicians to the peripheral public, and not the other way round. Since World War II the national press has given much attention to the publication of opinion polls, especially around election time. The publishing of polls certainly represents an attempt to solicit the opinions of the people, or perhaps to manipulate them, but the polls themselves provide only an index of popular opinion at any given moment; they are not an articulation of popular ideas, only a state-

ment of their existence.

Many Members of Parliament feel the pressure of the media on their own functions. Many feel superseded in their role as the articulators of policy since those policies are more often articulated to the public by newspaper or television commentators. Some of the sharpest probes during question time have come when a government policy or announcement has been discussed in The Times or on the B.B.C.'s Panorama before it has made its way into the pages of Hansard. The point here is that when the national politicians themselves feel overshadowed by the influence of the press, both at the local and national levels, and when they feel that their own messages are short circuited by the apparatus of mass communications, how can members of the 'peripheral public' hope to have their ideas articulated in those media?

The three channels of communication between the public and the politicians usually thought of as the most direct kind of political contact do not, then, serve as a means of bridging the gap in reverse communications. Their impotence in this regard has not escaped the notice of students in British politics, and some have made corresponding judgments about the function of the Member of Parliament in a mass society. Richard Rose has written:

The M.P. appears to his constituents as a court of appeal to whom an individual might in very special circumstances turn for aid. He is not perceived as a man who should and does participate in a continuous feedback of messages between central government and his constituents. ?

The channels of communication remain open for members of the public remain open for members of the public in at least two instances - letters and sur-

geries; the other avenue, the media, seems cut off from mass access. But it can hardly be posited that the failure of the people to communicate with the parliamentary system through their elected representatives is due to a technical breakdown of the communications facilities. The channels exist; the problem is their desuetude.

Part Two

In the parliamentary system of Great Britain popular representatives are not always elected representatives. The precedents for this practice were suggested in the first chapter. In the classical age of British parliamentary representation, many times the most skillful and persuasive articulators of the needs and wants of the disenfranchised lower classes were themselves members of the ruling class. With the coming of democratic inclinations in the nineteenth century there came also the rise of mass party organizations, as it was hoped that popular expressions of opinion could be built into partisan institutions. The party machines outside of Parliament continue to exist in the twentieth century as a means of tying together people and government. These mass organizations reflect a need for popular involvement of some kind in the governmental process; logically one would expect to find a communications apparatus operating within the party structure and one would hope it extended in both directions. Since the party structure ostensibly operates to do just that it is necessary to examine contemporary perception of the reverse communications gap as it exists within the parties themselves. This section is a statement of the

presence of that gap within the parties; an entire chapter of the paper will be devoted to an analysis of its development.

Any discussion of the communicative capacity of the party structures in Great Britain must start with an important caveat. It is that traditionally the parties have solicited the opinions of their followers in formal and informal ways but more importantly have reserved the right to ignore them. There are, of course, limits as to how far this disregard of opinion can go, but it is consistent with the British leadership norms even in a democratic society. Neither of the major parties has been reluctant to screen the opinion process. The Conservative faith in the necessity for independence of the leadership was best expressed by Lord Randolph Churchill in his comment that he would no more take the advice of the Conservative Conference than he would that of his valet. The Labour party has also managed to free itself of the dictates of its mass organization just at the time, significantly enough, when the Parliamentary Labour movement had begun to emerge as a real force in British politics. A continuing realization of that structural fact and the sociological norm which gives rise to it must be kept firmly in mind throughout the analysis which follows.

The British constituency party, be it Conservative or Labour, contains three distinct elements of popular involvement. There are the individuals who comprise the bulk of the party's membership rolls - this is the area of nominal membership. Secondly, there are the more committed members of the constituency associations; they are the party supporters whose main service to the party comes during election campaigns when they canvass or lick envelopes. In addition they pay regular party dues and attend such lo-

party conclaves as may be held during the course of the year. The third class of membership is by far the most active, therefore the most influential; this is the group of deeply involved party members who compose the leadership of the constituency association. For them politics is at least an avocation. These three levels of involvement - the general, the committed and the activist - show a high rate of attrition from least to greatest, and the party membership as a whole is generally only a small proportion of the total electorate of the constituency. The Conservative party relies for the most part on independent memberships while the Labour party includes the collective delegates from cooperative societies and trade unions; nonetheless the pattern of involvement is the same.

The local constituency parties may be structured through varying levels of involvement, but the control of the local units rests with the activist elements. The reason for the leadership being so constituted are not so obvious as might be thought from a cursory glance. In commenting on a problem which had already reached significant proportions, an authoritative commentator wrote in 1930:

... it is clear that the control of the parties is not possessed by the rank and file. With the increase in the power of the organization (nationally) and the expansion of the electorate has come the enhanced importance of the professional element. 8

Another section of this paper deals with the causes of the communications gap at some length, but it must be noted here that democratic control of the parties has suffered, however paradoxically, from the infusion of democracy into the political system. Dealing with an expanded electorate requires a good deal of time and some rather specialized knowledge on the

part of the local party people; by their function in a mass electorate the parties have tended to cut themselves off from mass involvement - and this is one reason at least for the preponderance of the activist element. It is also one reason why the average citizen, if that is the right phrase, has difficulty in getting his views across to the national leadership through the party machines. He has little if any control of the local units and those local units are not overly solicitous about encouraging him in the expression of his views 9

The fact that the activist elements have more time and more effort to lend to the local party encourages their domination of the local unit over a period of time. The entrenchment of their position is allied to their capacity to lend their resources; but even so it constitutes another breach in the communications gap. Many of the Members of Parliament interviewed for this study spoke of the difficulty of breaching the distance 'from committee room to doorknocker'; that is, from the political center of representation at the local level to the people of the community at large. The most frequently voiced criticisms were that the local parties occupied themselves with functional duties at the expense of cutting themselves off from the very people they were trying to reach. Even in such an important activity as an election campaign this introspection persists, as Richard A. Butler pointed out in the Nuffield study of 1951:

Many agents regard meetings as a traditional incubus in the business of electioneering. 'One spends half one's time arranging and advertising them, and then only the converted come - and they'd be much better occupied in canvassing', sighed one disillusioned organizer. 10

The political sterility of many constituency parties may be more obvious

at an election but its influence is felt with consistency in the more important day to day affairs of the party. Some regular contact is maintained with the electorate during the party canvass or membership drive, but even here the contact's value, or even its existence, is dubious. One Conservative local agent spoke of the difficulty of enlisting the faithful in the canvassing drive at all and added, "To get them to go in and canvass in a council house (a traditional Labour stronghold) I would have to convince them it was the back door to Buckingham Palace".

Other methods of contact with the mass public take place when the party sponsors local events. These may be social activities of all kinds: whist drives, wine and cheese parties, bingo, dances and the like. All of them seem to be derived from the assumption that political contact can be had by making party activities seem less dull, even for a moment, than they really are. Depending upon the initiative of the local party heads it is almost possible to choose one's political allegiance, at least nominally, from the social calendar of the local parties; the whist, wine and cheese crowd usually go Conservative, devotees of bingo attend Labour's occasional fetes while partisans of both groups attend the dances held by their respective parties from time to time.

A more overtly political purpose is responsible for public meetings sponsored by the local party units. On these occasions a prominent figure either locally or nationally will address as many of the local party members and concerned citizenry as can be rounded up for the evening. Very probably this is the most valuable service that the local parties perform, since it provides members of the party and the public with a genuine chance to take verbal potshots at prominent personalities. Aside from the salutary

effects that this may have, it does provide a reasonably good forum for the general exchange of views between electors and elected, because its announced purpose is precisely that. Consequently it is not a part of an M.P.'s ombudsman function but a chance to enable him to talk directly and politically to the people he represents. Most of the Members interviewed for this study placed high value on the meeting's usefulness, while noting that it is somewhat limited for mass contact by its very nature. This is because most of the meetings are held on weekend nights in public or party buildings where facilities are not exactly commodious; also the greater part of the population seems to limit its political discussions on weekend nights to the taproom of the local public house. It is, however, significant that the local party units fulfill their communicative capacity best when they provide an opportunity for the public to by-pass them and speak to the representative directly.

Since Britain operates its parliamentary system with two major parties whose function it is to compete for the privilege of forming governments, and a third party whose function is as yet undetermined, it follows that some constituency parties will be without a Member of Parliament for their district. And since it has become increasingly apparent in recent years that most Parliamentary seats are 'safe' there would seem to be an indication that the extent of popular involvement in party activities and in communication processes generally is in a greater state of decrepitude than was previously evident even in the earlier sections of this chapter. In a recent (1966) study, Jorgen Rasmussen found that,

...in only a little more than a quarter of the parliamen-

tary constituencies in Britain do elections make any difference. In the great majority of constituencies the victor in an election is pre-ordained even before the candidates are adopted. The electorate does not in fact choose a representative in these seats; the effective choice, the true political power lies with the local party organization. This actually means that it is wielded by the small membership group which controls candidate selection. 11

The implications of this finding are that Britain's party system makes of the party officials at the local level a group of semi-autonomous political entities who are functionally elite from the mass of the electorate; in part this functional elitism is responsible for the reverse communications gap. Not only is an M.P. free of electoral sanction, but the party officials who choose him similarly divorced from the democratic imperatives by their functional necessity, i.e., they have more time and other resources to devote to party management. Nor does the gap end here. As one examines the recent studies of the role of constituency organizations one is struck by the fact that these associations, for all their local power, have a curiously limited influence. In a perceptive article in The (London) Times an anonymous author, described as "a well-known figure in British politics", recently wrote:

Both (major parties) are suffering in some ways from the same disease, a growing gap between the leadership and the workers in the constituencies, and a consequent alienation on the part of the many people from party politics as they have been played since the war. 12

Other prominent figures in British political life have not been so reticent about attaching their names to the growing body of literature recognizing their perception of this gap. Jo Grimond, former Leader of the Liberal party, has been most vociferous in his comments on this and other parliamen-

tary problems. In commenting on the leadership gap and the 'safe seat' problem he pointed out in a recent article:

... in theory this gap between party members and party representatives or between voters of the minority and the majority Member might be closed through the party structure. In theory a party member could go off to the annual conference and influence policy. In practice, the policies in office of the Labour party have borne no resemblance to the resolutions of their conferences on the policy on which they fought the election. 13

Even if one recalls the caveat of leadership norms as stated in the opening pages of this section, the lack of communications between the constituency parties and the annual conference shows the unique extent of the reverse gap of people and party.

In a five year period Richard Rose conducted a study which provided statistical documentation of non-communication between the local and national parties at the conferences. Briefly, the study provided data that the resolutions presented to the conference by the local activists were not of an extremist nature, or 'ideological', or in the words of the survey, "... constituency parties are nearly as apt to be voicing views derived from the cultural values or from interest group links as they are to voice those clearly associated with a partisan ideology" 14 In addition to puncturing the extremist myth which had been a persistent part of the conventional wisdom for so long Rose presented findings that were even more startling.

Approximately one third of Conservative constituency parties did not present a single resolution in the five year period studied (1955-1960); only 26 per cent forwarded an average of one resolution or more a year. This disinterest in pressing policy views cannot be attributed to poor party

organization, because virtually all English Conservative constituency associations are sufficiently well organized to have a full time party agent. 15

The failure to communicate was not, then, dictated by a lack of organization. Although traditionally portrayed as the more democratic of the two, the Labour party was not exempted from the trend. In summarizing his findings Rose stated:

Among Conservative constituencies 74 per cent file resolutions less than once a year on the average; in the Labour party the proportion is 79 per cent. 16

And there was for good measure a final biting comment:

The Labour leadership is reverting to the Burkean position maintained by many Conservatives, that an M.P. owes his constituency party supporters nothing more than his informed and independent judgment. 17

Clearly the record showed the failure of the conference as a means of reverse communications.

Professor Rose has also made some interesting studies which tend to confirm the curiously attenuated influence of the constituency parties, and specifically the activist section of them. Noting that the activists have effective control of the selection process for prospective Members of Parliament, Rose placed himself among the many "students of British politics (who) have commented upon the failure of the constituency parties to exercise their considerable powers over the candidates in such a way as to produce M.P. s with views like their own" 18 Certainly the overriding reason for this most significant failure is in the nature of the party system itself. Although the authority of the central offices is carefully played down in most treatises on the subject, it is difficult to believe that the

local parties carry forward the selection process in a vacuum. Each candidate must, of course, be on an approved list of one sort or another and it is doubtful that the central office organization staffs who compile them would actively seek out for approbation those highly committed types whose conduct might prejudice the norms of 'party discipline' which prevail in Westminster. An inquiry into this area might seek to determine if central office influence is sufficiently strong to 'flunk the activists out before they get in'.

Because the power and the influence of the activists is so obviously limited in the two areas where that influence is widely thought to be profound, Rose and others have felt impelled to defend their legitimacy. Activist views were important for the following reasons: people and parliament

First, activists may be mobilized to support a faction within the elite during a leadership crisis. Second, activists are a major channel of communication between M.P.s and party leaders and the electorate at large. Third, they are presumed to be the last stronghold of ideologies within the party system. 19

Clearly what was being defended was the right of what popular elements exist within the party structures to be consulted. It is significant that even the most powerful democratic element within that system was supreme in its own sphere - the local parties were and are virtually autonomous. But in those functions where their influence would be greatest, the party counsels and the makeup of the parliamentary party personnel, in those areas their power could not be brought to bear. Consequently the local parties are in-ter-rospective and hierarchical; the constituency organizations cannot serve to the full extent of their communicative capacity - or anything approach-

ing it -because the channels of upward communications have not been exploited by the party membership personnel.

Part Three

In exploring the nature of the communications gap as it is currently perceived this study has dealt far more with what the communications system is not rather than what it is. Detailed descriptions of what the communications system is and how it works are available from several sources which give this topic the special detailed treatment it deserves. This study has been more concerned with demonstrating the communications gap by examining perception of the breakdown of contact between people and parliament at what were thought to be the primary levels of political interaction: the local Member of Parliament and the local constituency party. Before moving into the concluding section of this chapter, which deals with suggested causes and solutions of the problem, it is fitting to place the present findings in the perspective of general commentary on Britain's parliamentary reform needs.

It would be quite unfair to say that either Members of Parliament, the parties or the government are totally out of touch with public opinion; presumably if that were the case the parliamentary system would not exist for very long. What is being posited here is a series of communications 'short circuits' which may be partly responsible for the growing disillusionment with party politics as they are now being practiced in Britain. There is, for example, no reason why any great importance should be attached to

either the letter or the surgery as the only means of contact available to the conscientious Member of Parliament. Most M.P.s are quick to point out that their conceptions of what their constituents are thinking are "the sum of all I do", and that no one area of their activities could be assigned absolute primacy. Nor is there any reason to think that the local parties' communications to the national leadership are limited to party conferences. Communication of some sort goes on from the electors to the elected every day - usually in collective terms. If the case for the reverse communications gap rested solely on the absence of any type of communication from the ground upwards then the case would be weak indeed.

The studies presented in this chapter show the absence of a kind of individual expression essential to democratic government. While the parliamentary system may be able to gauge its policies and actions on general guidelines laid down by public opinion, to limit this political contact to an occasional election or to what the media say is going on is to risk an imprecise stance which is potentially disastrous. At least part of the phenomenon known as Enoch Powell which struck Britain in the spring of 1968 was due not so much to innate racism of white Britons as to the fact that Powell was confirming a fear which many people had felt, but which had not been allowed to come to the surface of British political life. What followed was an ungoverned release of pent-up tensions which muddled the national atmosphere for weeks and which still has not been resolved. It was a startling example of a volatile issue which was not allowed expression through normal channels and became all the more dangerous for that very reason. Potentially what is called into question is the efficacy of

the communications apparatus for handling thorny issues.

Perhaps the nature of the communications process within the party structure was best described by Richard Rose:

Political parties, like pressure groups, play an important part in the feedback of political messages. The ambiguity involved in party membership has created controversy. On the one hand, national party leaders are interested in communicating with all who belong to the party simply by voting for it. On the other hand, the organization of the party provides a means of communication for the small fraction of voters who pay dues and attend party meetings. 21

While the activist section of the party is essentially cut off from the rest of the electorate the voters can only go to the chief representative of that local party, the M.P. The evidence presented earlier indicates that they are not doing that. More weight is added to the argument of non-contact when one considers the falling status of the M.P. in the national eye.

Last September (1968), a Gallup poll showed that only 17 per cent of the people had a 'high opinion of the sort of people who get elected as Labour Members of Parliament' and only 19 per cent held high opinions of Conservative M.P.s. Perhaps most damning of all is the evidence produced by Gallup last June that only 7 per cent of the country regard the average Member of Parliament as having a 'great influence on this country's future'. 23

The pattern of falling respect is carried further when considering the 'usefulness' of the M.P.

In their latest survey, N.O.P. (National Opinion Polls) presented voters with nine uncomplimentary statements about politicians. Half or more of the voters agreed with each disparaging remark... Moreover M.P.s were ranked fifth out of eight occupations in usefulness to the community behind doctors, teachers, businessmen and

policemen. When occupations were ranked in terms of least usefulness, M.P.s came second, with only clergymen less useful in the public eye. 24

Surely this is a situation far removed from those happy times in which the British politicians enjoyed a good deal of popular esteem, so much so that it was almost an article of faith for comparative political scientists to contrast the amused contempt in which most Americans hold their political leaders with the deference shown the Member of Parliament. Perhaps nothing is so crucial to the existence of the communications gap as this widely perceived disutility of the M.P. Channels of communication may be altered; they may be superseded by other and better methods of contact. Letter writing and surgeries may be replaced by alternative patterns of discussion. But correspondence of any kind implies the prior existence of a willingness to interact, and it is that willingness which is now notably absent from the British political scene. Under a democratic government as the British Parliament, when the people think that the M.P. is unimportant then, by definition, he is unimportant, and cannot therefore expect extensive contacts with his constituents. A kind of feedback operates in such a system with lowering levels of exposure and perception and competence in communications in both directions.

Here it might be well to mention a subsidiary point. It is that many Members of Parliament do in fact look for other ways of reaching their constituents. There is certainly a movement to seek out interest groups in the constituency. A seaside area may have a number of formal or informal fishermen's associations with which the local Member will try to make contact, preferably at a specially arranged meeting. Other ambitious represent-

atives have switched emphasis from the social whirl of constituency 'airings' which the M.P. is subjected to each weekend in his constituency to a more direct form of contact which involves them in personal canvassing in the more obscure corners of the district. Perhaps the failure of the old is once again being expressed in the search for the new.

In attempting to document the existence of the communications gap it would be unfair not to present some important commentary which specifically posits that such a gap does not exist, and that if it does it is insignificant. Most Members of Parliament fall into the first category. Since so many of them are so involved in communicating with their constituents on a non-political level they apt to point out that, if anything, a profusion of communications exists between them and their constituents. On the more serious side, however, as perceptive a commentator on political communications as Richard Rose concluded his otherwise admirable chapter on the subject in Politics In England with the observation that the, "great stability of the regime is strong indirect evidence of the general satisfaction with existing patterns of communication and non-communication 25 Yet the dissatisfaction with that very system is important evidence that the existing patterns of communication are not enough, a dissatisfaction which has become more obvious since Rose wrote those words, and whose course he himself has helped to plot.

Rose also paraphrased a more convincing argument in that same book. It was Samuel H. Beer's contention that "much communication is made unnecessary by the identification of party and class". a process which involves "continuous feedback" and frees the politicians from "constant communication

with the peripheral public, yet through pressure group, party and class ties, individuals may still communicate with national politicians" 26 That argument is predicated upon two assumptions: the coherence of the class structure with its corresponding party allegiances and the success of the communications apparatus as measured by the degree of satisfaction which it evokes. The second is easier to dispose of than the first. There is a clear body of opinion which is dissatisfied with the present parliamentary system in general and the communications aspect of it in particular, so much so that even a hard-backed realist like former press lord Cecil King writes of "the declining reputation of parliamentary democracy" almost as if it were a commonplace. There is also much at hand to show that the first assumption, that of a stratified class system, is in many respects dubious. Much of the evidence, some of which will be presented later in this paper, tends to show that class lines are becoming increasingly nebulous and so, consequently, are party allegiances. Careful students of British politics have long noted the mobility of the British class structure and its practical use in electoral politics since World War II shows that the old lines are not so hard and fast as they once were - either by party or by class.

Political scientists have been criticized for being so swift in some of their condemnations of British politics. The Maxwell Fyfe Report made to the Conservative party in 1949 recognized the need not for "... a Constitution which seems tidy to the student of political history or logical in all respects, as for an organization which is an educative political force and a machine for winning elections" 27 Tidiness or logic, it must be said, have never been the most consistent of the virtues of the parlia-

mentary system, and many times the cries for reform of one type or another have been dismissed as the ravings of academicians or, even worse, of young M.P.s on their way up; it was presumed that with age and experience would come a recognition to these unfortunates of the value of muddling through. It was just that kind of reception which greeted a speech made by the Labour Minister of Technology, Anthony Wedgwood Benn, at Llandudno, Wales on May 25, 1968. Coming in the wake of a wave of student violence on the continent, it nonetheless stands as one of the best statements by a national politician on the existence of the communications problem.

The Times summarized the speech as follows:

- a) People should know more about the work of government.
- b) Government should know better the communities it served.
- c) The decision making function of the electorate should be broadened, possibly by instituting a referendum.
- d) The whole field of mass communications should be re-examined.
- e) The consultative strength of the representative groups in the nation should be built up and the role of the pressure group scrutinized.
- f) The Labour party should be re-organized to take in a more democratic means of expression. 28

By far the most interesting of all these recommendations is the fourth one and in paraphrasing his comments on that specific topic the Times said:

(Mr. Benn) called for "... a radical re-examination of mass communications."

A Prime Minister could address the nation, a press tycoon could print his own article to be read by millions. For ordinary people the only way of answering back was to walk about with a placard and hope for a picture. The public was stuck with a communications apparatus that had

hardly changed since the Stone Age. "Perhaps this is one explanation for the fact that protest is edging ever closer to violence," Mr. Benn said. 29

The impact of the speech and its broad implications are strong enough to stand on their own. It only needs to be added that one of the most significant aspects of the speech was the reaction it drew from the other sections of the polity. For a Labour Minister to speak openly of participatory democracy is considered somewhat poor form, unless of course he were to disparage the need for it. As it was the reaction to the Benn speech was overwhelmingly critical, and it was not limited to one side of the House. Prominent Labour left-winger Emmanuel Shinwell lost no time in deprecating the idea of a referendum, "because the public did not have all the information on some major issues on which to give a considered judgment". As the Times reported it,

At that, Mr. Shinwell was a good deal more kind to Mr. Benn than Mr. Hogg, the Opposition spokesman on home affairs, who commented: 'It was a load of old codswallop'. Parliamentary government was breaking down, he agreed, but Mr. Benn had not seen the reason for this. 'All we want is a general election', he said. 30

The Llandudno speech was not even exempted from criticism by one of Benn's cabinet colleagues, Home Secretary James Callaghan, who obliquely repudiated it in another speech which was widely thought to represent the Government's official view of the matter.

"Whatever troubles there may be on the Continent, no one in Britain will ever be able to claim that there is no dialogue between Government, the institutions, and the people", Mr. Callaghan... said in Edinburgh last night. "On the contrary, the air is blue and sulphurous with argument, some of which produces more heat than light." 31

The problem was put in a better perspective by a leading article in the Times on May 27, entitled 'The Dangerous Gap'. Recognizing the true importance of the problem as many others had not, the Times called it, "the greatest challenge facing democracy today," The leader then went on:

Many advanced states are experiencing, within themselves, the same kinds of gap between public opinion and the machinery of government. A paradox of society is revealed: the society creates problems so complex that they can only be handled by those with specialist skill and intricate knowledge, and at the same time it produces people who are in general more highly educated than previous generations. It centralized decision-making but spreads the desire to make decisions. How can democracy, in this predicament, satisfy both the need for greater efficiency and the need for wider participation ?

With customary precision the Times had hit the nail on the head. All the arguments in support of the existence of the gap are neatly summed up in the last two sentences of that paragraph. How, indeed, is the question with which the next section deals.

Part Four

It must first be emphasized in examining the possible solution to the communications problem that there is no single answer which by itself will eliminate the gap. Since none of the causes for it exist in a vacuum it is unlikely that the solutions will either.

Easily the most demonstrable cause for the communications gap is the set of social and cultural norms which are the backbone of British life. That this should be so seems obvious, yet it frequently neglected or even ignored when one seeks to find ways of political emendation. Non-communic-

tion is usually the result of non-participation, which comes about either as the result of early training or of alienation and anomie. It has been pointed out above how alienation plays a large part in the non-communication in British politics; but it should be stressed that the alienation enforces much earlier training.

The process of political socialization in England involves inculcating in a select few a concern for national politics and an expectation that their views are worth communicating; the majority are socialized for passive political roles, involving the avoidance of much political communication. 32

The effects of this early training are statistically verifiable:

Political Participation In Britain

	Estimated Number	Estimated % of Electorate
Electorate, 1959	35,400,000	100%
Party identifiers	27,950,000	79%
Voters, 1959	27,850,000	79%
Organization members	16,650,000	47%
Party members, all categories	8,850,000	22%
Informed (named 6 politicians)	5,650,000	16%
Very interested in politics	5,300,000	15%
Organization officers (past, present)	4,950,000	14%
Individual party members	3,225,000	9%
Local party activists	138,000	0.5%

See Richard Rose: Politics In England (Table IV.2-p.89)

Richard Rose points out that the product of sociological norms can be expressed in other ways than electoral voting charts. The parliamentary system is geared toward the expression of distinguished individual opinion, but not to the solicitation of commonplace individual opinion. People in high places have an easier time getting their views across to the pol-

political center than do the more menial types who characterize the general run of the population. The situation will recall the parallel with eighteenth century Britain in which access to parliamentary communications channels was limited and the channels extraordinarily well marked.

It will also be remembered from the first chapter that the source of power in English society was cut off from the people. The leadership did not, however, ignore the wishes of the masses, and made quite a practice of articulating them. That function still rests with the governing classes and it means that while public opinion is heeded, even encouraged, it is not solicited; the difference is that public opinion is heeded somewhat after the fact. Edmund Burke should be kept firmly in mind when considering the comment of Lord Reith of the B.B.C. collectivist age for several genera-

It is occasionally indicated to us that we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need - and the and not what they want - but few know what they want and very few what they need. 33

The strongly felt norm of positive leadership can also be sensed in the excessive concern given to governmental secrecy on most matters. Secrecy and elitism are the results of effective socialization, and together they work to shut off reverse communications.

This traditionally aloof attitude on the part of the ruling classes has been extended into the twentieth century by the emergence of a new kind of elite; its roots are not grounded in property or commodity but in intellect. With the coming of sophisticated technology and more complex problems and issues has come a need for a kind of intellectual elite. Accustomed to the more abstruse worlds of academe and laboratory, "... the intellectual

may, in his splendid isolation, become insensitive to the bewilderment and human distress which is often seen to follow from the actions of governments, scientists and technologists..." 34 Problems of a complex nature may not be easily translated to the man in the street and its increasingly hard for him to make sense out of the issues which he is expected to handle politically. Understanding the issues is next to impossible, voting intelligently on them only less so, and communicating about them on a political level a hardship scarcely to be endured.

If there is an intellectual elite which has become grafted onto the political center, there is also a consultative elite which is one of the most powerful forces in modern British government. The United Kingdom has in fact been embarked upon the 'neo-collectivist' age for several generations, and it has meant the rise of the great representative institutions: unions, associations, societies of all descriptions, cooperatives and the like. All claim to speak for the individuals who comprise their membership and there is little doubt that on some issues they do. The power of these groups is one response to democracy that the parliamentary system has made over the years, and its contributions should not be missed. But since these groups have a great unwritten right - and in Britain there is no other kind - to be consulted on the problems which directly concern them, they have made collective action a sanctified thing; individual consultation and individual action are almost completely out of the question, unless - as has been seen - one happens to be a person of note. Each of these institutions risks deadening individual initiative just by virtue of being an institution. Thus the circle is complete.

The consultative agencies work with the top echelons of British government in what Rose would refer to as 'horizontal communications'. Both the agencies and the government at that stage are securely insulated from the reach of popular opinion. A closed circle operates on those levels and the effects of any action reverberate around the corners and warrens of Whitehall and Westminster with an intensity, or lack of it, which may not be an accurate reflection of the country as a whole. There is a clear tendency to listen more carefully to what the 'horizontal' communicators are saying as opposed to the information which may be filtering up from the 'vertical' channels.

This tendency is reinforced by the mechanics of party government. Popular control of government is submerged beneath the imperatives of party loyalty and ministerial responsibility. Power itself is exceedingly centralized in the Cabinet and the Prime Minister, all effectively beyond the reach of common individual opinion. The party machine which exists 'outside' of government is in a more important sense an integral part of the party in Parliament. And here it must be made clear that it is the 'professional' side of the party organization that is being referred to, an aspect of the party which is by no means a popular institution. Both major parties recognize the institution of Party Leader and both, to a greater or lesser degree, have built a civil service around him on a hierarchical model for the express purpose of conducting party affairs. By being professional the parties feel they cannot afford to be democratic, even though the machine is supposedly a vehicle of democratic expression. Many students of British politics have commented on the ascendancy of the Central Office on both sides

of Smith Square, among them James Pollock, who observed almost forty years ago that,

Central Office really is the party organization and... the large federations of constituency organizations have ceased to play an important part in the party mechanism. Contrary to certain written accounts, the Central Office is not the child of the big federation, nor has it been established or extended by it. It has grown up despite the opposition of the democratic organization of the party until it has crowded out control by the rank and file... the extension of the suffrage necessitated the concentration in the Central Offices of control over the party organizations outside of Parliament. As the Cabinet has grown in power and authority, so have the Central Offices. 35

The trend has not been reversed in the intervening years; if anything it has strengthened almost to the point where democratic expression within the party structure is thought of as an anachronism. The suggestion of democratic control of the party bureaucracy is regarded as little less than heresy.

The oligarchic nature of the local party structures has already been described; their ability to serve as a communications vehicle has consequently been dismissed. What is even more alarming is the extent to which British constituencies find themselves subjected to one-party rule as a practical device, a point touched on earlier. The author of the study which documented the fact pointed out that, "Attenuation of the representative accountability to the degree ascertained in Britain obviously runs counter to the model of democratic government " 36 What the poor man was evidently trying to say was that the common individual found even the one element of popular control left to him, the ballot box, seriously compromised by the party system. If the franchise cannot be used to control the politicians

in Parliament, what good will communications of any sort do?

The breakdown in reverse communications has also been traced to the ephemeral nature of the party conflict which is alleged to take place in Parliament daily. According to Nigel Nicolson, this seemingly great conflict is little more than a sham. "Elsewhere...the object is to minimize conflict; in politics the object is to augment it, and where it doesn't exist, seek it out" 37 The search for conflict many times means that the rational alternative won't do, since it isn't good politics. The voter is excluded in all of this but his alternatives are limited to choosing one or the other of the major parties, which is not precisely the ultimate sanction. Peter Bromhead has pointed out that voter sanctions on election day will at worst inconvenience one party - or possibly two, depending on one's point of view - and 'this is not much of a penalty at all' 38 The real penalty rests with the elector.

In that same leading article in which the Times commented on the Benn speech at Llandudno there was this summation of Britain's parliamentary malaise:

There has been increasing dissatisfaction with British politics for two reasons. One is the feeling that so much part debate is irrelevant to the more complicated questions now facing the country. The second is that politicians are not sufficiently in touch with public opinion. 39

The latter reason has received some attention in these pages, but the former may well turn out to be the more important. In a sense it is the very soul of the problem. In postwar Britain the magnitude of fulfilling a difficult international role with a handicapped domestic capability has pro-

vided the backdrop for much political debate. Yet there is the feeling that the party apparatus has failed as a device for solving the nation's ills. The relevance that this reality has on the existence of communications is obvious. People will conform to the old norms only so long as they can do so comfortably, even though it is undoubtedly true that Britons will conform longer than most. Much of the restiveness which is now felt, particularly in the negative response of a refusal to communicate in the traditional ways, is due to the dissatisfaction with the party structure as pointed out in the Times article. In another article in the same newspaper shortly thereafter an anonymous author wrote:

This is in many respects the situation that Mr. (Jo) Grimond foresaw in the late fifties: a political system that was fundamentally out of joint because Government no longer responded to the needs of the governed and the party machine had been developed to answer the need for that type of government. 40

This grim diagnosis has elicited a host of suggested solutions aimed at correcting the gap in reverse communications, answers which are hoped will have a wide variety of therapeutic effects for the parliamentary system as a whole. Many of these suggested solutions are aimed at correcting a specific aspect of the problem, others are more general and far-reaching. Still other 'solutions' are not really solutions at all, but are kind of nebulous consciousness that "something must be done", although no one is quite sure what.

The solution to the root cause of the problem, the social norms of British life, is generally unknown, although speculation is rife. It is not clear to what extent education is a cause of the problem or a possible solu-

tion to it. This the curious dichotomy pointed out by the Times, that education encourages more awareness at the same time it promotes the exclusivity of specialization. Certainly there is every reason to believe that education will be made available in greater quantity and, one would hope, quality to an increasing number of young Britons; if this is the case it is difficult to see how passive political conditioning could continue to operate on such a large scale as it does now. Another self-actualizing solution to these norms is the increasing mobility, both social and physical, of the British worker. It is difficult to make a strictly 'class' appeal to a worker whose own class identity is somewhat indistinct. The argument is also made that if a worker is capable of choosing his physical environment, say by moving from Manchester to Bognor Regis, then he is likely to be more concerned with his political environment as well, and take steps to control it more actively than is now the case.

In considering the larger context of the problem one hears a great deal about the 'new regionalism' in Britain. What is being referred to is the growing need for decentralization of government, and both major parties are committed in one form or another to this movement back to the provinces. Marshall Macluhan has laid the theoretical foundations for tying more effective control of environment together with regionalism of all sorts. It must remain to be seen if regionalism can have the effect on communications claimed for it, but it must be pointed out that neither of the two major parties can claim to have anywhere near the proportional amount of enthusiastic workers now possessed by some of the separatist minority parties, notably the S.N.P.

While there is a movement for some kind of regionalism and devolution of governmental responsibility, it is unlikely that popular representation in the economic sphere will be a proffered solution in the foreseeable future. Representative institutions of all areas of the economy have had to fight hard to gain their present status and a movement for reform should be looked for within that system rather than outside it. Benn's Llandudno speech, it will be recalled, specifically spoke of the need for strengthening of such institutions rather than the undermining of them altogether. Commenting on that suggestion the Times pointed out:

Democracy is served, without loss of efficiency, if government is forced to deal with other centers of power. One of the most decisive debates now going on is the three cornered debate between the Government, the T.U.C., and the C.B.I. Of course there is always the danger that trade unions, organizations, professional bodies may exercise a degree of tyranny over their members. But the answer to that must be to regulate their procedures where necessary, not to destroy their influence. 41

No other solutions to this touchy problem have yet been advanced. No one really disputes the existence of these associations but neither does anyone know how to make them more representative of the rank and file.

Since World War II students and observers of British politics have had to learn a new word: psephology - the study of voting trends and shifts with the use of statistical data. The study of opinion polls and their relation to electoral advantage has occupied the attention of academicians, politicians and the general public to the point where people wonder how they ever got on before without them. The use of polls has a greater significance than simply 'tipping the winners' in an electoral joust; it has broad possibilities for providing a precise index on the popular consensus on an

issue at a given moment. No longer is it possible for the politician to disclaim his perception of popular opinion in a purely anecdotal fashion. He is believed he must be able to show supporting statistical evidence for any statement he makes regarding popular opinion. By being able to measure public opinion the psephologists have made it impossible for the parliamentary system to ignore the impact of popular thought, however much it might like to.

Why then, it may be argued, are not polls recognized as the means of bridging the reverse communications gap? This would in fact be an easy answer but it would also be an inaccurate and a misleading one. Polls do have an important set of usages but there is an increasing body of opinion which has called the use of polls into some doubt. Most of this commentary has centered on the ephemeral use to which psephology has been consigned. It is pointed out that popular opinion, once it is known, can be put to far more constructive purposes than predicting the winner of an election three days before the fact. Richard Rose, himself an able psephologist, has written of this 'tactical' use of the polls which serves to aid direction of an appeal to various segments of the electorate, but are rarely used in the more important determination of policy.⁴² This use of polls can hardly be thought of as a great triumph of democratic expression, since it is merely a refinement of the existing communications apparatus - from the top down. Appeals are being aimed at the people, but the popular response is again indirect and nebulous, and even then it may be ignored.

Much criticism has dealt with the fact that polls and pollsters tend to concentrate simply on the results of what the people may happen to think

on a given issue at a given moment; it is suggested that this result is only superficial, that what is even more important is the attitude structure of the community at large. Many factors influence a decision which is finally expressed in a voting booth, and to concentrate only on the result of a vote is to ignore the psychological complexities which bear so much on the problem. The exploration of this field of electoral theory has fallen to electoral sociologists. Comparatively little has been done in the field, so little in fact that there are serious breaches in both the theory and practice of psephology. Graeme Moodie has written:

The importance of the 'images' presented by a party and its leaders has been stressed. But we still know little or nothing about the way in which these images are formed nor why one rather than another of several conflicting images comes to predominate... It is therefore still impossible confidently to determine the relative role in the formation of images of such things as party behaviour, social circumstances and individual attitudes. 43

The foxes and hounds approach to psephology has been criticized also for not paying enough attention to the formation of political attitudes which takes place between elections. Political theorist John Plamenatz pointed out that the electoral process was an evolutionary thing and viewed efforts at quantification as, at best, imprecise as an indicator of the thoughts and ideas of the masses 44 Peter Campbell suggested over ten years ago that 'American style opinion polls' be instituted as a continuing index of social opinion, and added,

In conjunction with studies of the local attitudes of parties and semi-political bodies they could add greatly to our knowledge of politics and help us put elections into their proper place as steps in a political process that is continual and not intermittent. 45

Although it may be impossible for the political elite to ignore totally the findings of the psephologists, it must not be assumed that they don't try. Consequently one of the major obstacles to the use of polls is the politician. Government in general is guilty of this as well, somewhat of a carry-over from the old idea of articulating the wishes of the masses; when the masses get a voice of their own it is discounted. The government has been urged to take steps in the direction of direct citizen participation by the use of market research methods. The determination of a need comes in many ways and it is suggested that using known techniques whose utility has been proven in the market place can make that judgment more precise. Its precision can be proven by statistical method and its integrity assured because it is the citizen who is being consulted. This argument has been put most persuasively by William Gregory in a recent article. He also points out that this research could be carried forward by the government, since it already makes use of statistical method in many of its departments. The census data, for example, have broad sociological and political implications; the results of the research could be made available on a bi-partisan basis. In this way communication from the ground upwards could be achieved, hopefully on a scientific basis.

The objection usually made to this kind of reform which involves the citizen in other than a passive political role is to the effect popular opinion must give way to leadership, which, being interpreted, means that Parliament must have its own way; Burke is dusted off, trotted out, and the issue confused, while 'Tory democracy' is conveniently forgotten. Gregory goes out of his way to puncture that objection.

The people's demand is for their voice to be heard. They do not demand obedience. They expect those who run the country to make those decisions. Provided that the people's voice has been heard, and provided that those who make the decisions have gone out of their way to explain them and explain why they differ from public instruction, the public will accept the decision against them, and respect for those in authority is increased. 46

It should be noted here that these are not unreasonable demands to make upon a government which is 'of the people, by the people' - and supposedly for them as well.

In examining the possible solutions to the communications problem, it is of little use to talk about improved methods of voicing popular opinion if the parliamentary structure is organized so as to take no notice of it. The problem of specialized information mentioned earlier cannot, similarly, be transmitted to the electorate for their rational dispensation if that data is virtually incomprehensible. As always, the communications system must operate in both directions with input, output and feedback clearly expressed at both ends. The problem of gearing the parliamentary structure and the party system to the regular two-way flow of information is not inconsiderable. The next two chapters deal exclusively with the efforts of the two major parties to do just that, and a discussion of the possibilities for far reaching reform of the system could, and no doubt will, fill many volumes. What can be stated here is that much of the discussion which aims at solving the problem is highly nebulous. One example of the genre is Jo Grimond who says that direct democracy on the Athenian model won't do, "but there has to be a lot more democracy". It is commonly perceived in Britain that more democracy is in order, but how that is to be achieved is another matter.

More specific solutions to more specific aspects of this broad trend have come forward. One of the most interesting has been the suggestion that there be a democratic re-organization of the local parties. This has, however, taken two tacks. The one treats re-organization of the constituency as a goal and function of the professional politicians at the local level. It involves integrating into the local parties an expanded proportion of the electorate whose function it will be to act as political cadres so as to garner votes for the party. The other side of the re-organization suggests that numbers are not so important as proportions, that the constituency organizations must be truly representative, not only of the party's supporters in the area but of the constituency as a whole. The debate over the two forms of representation has gone on since World War II and as such it forms an important backdrop to the efforts of both the Conservative and Labour parties' efforts in that period. Angus Campbell pointed out in 1957 that there might be an important use for constituency voting surveys, not for the light they cast on national contests but for what they showed about local consciousness and political issues.⁴⁷ Much of this debate has resulted in specific programs, some of which are described in the next two chapters. But it must be made clear that one solution to the communications problem has been to focus attention on the constituencies in an effort to stimulate meaningful political contact at the grass roots.

The flow of propaganda from the party machines and from the government has been one attempt to overcome the problem of specialized information. At least part of the reason for the failure of that effort is that much of this political propaganda goes unread; if it is understood at all by those

who do read it is another question. Policy communications are by definition from the top down but are nonetheless vital. David Hennessy has commented on the over-all difficulty of translating policy complexities into meaningful political contacts on an individual level, saying that the success of any propaganda is first predicated on an initial favorable predisposition on the part of the electorate. Then the message itself must usually be oversimplified to some degree, usually greatly. But the contact itself must usually be aimed at a specific section of the electorate if it is to have maximum impact.⁴⁸ There is some question as to the possibilities of overcoming these seemingly inherent difficulties. There is another more important question to be raised as to the efficacy of bringing the people into the decision process at such a late stage. It is very well to have the apparatus waiting to transmit the results of political decisions to the public, but when the public has little to do with arriving at that decision, then this kind of communication seems patronizing at best.

There are a great many other suggestions on how Parliament should be reformed; here an attempt has been made to deal only with those suggested reforms which bear directly on the problem of reconciling the gap in reverse communications generally. Even the referendum suggested by Mr. Benn most lately and perennially by a good many others is no more than an offshoot of the present electoral procedure and seemingly little more than a redundancy. It was that single recommendation on the Llandudno speech which was singled out for special abuse by almost everyone, the Times included. What might be said in closing is that whatever mechanical corrections may take place as a result of the need to involve people in government more directly

what is most important is the underlying political consciousness with which those reforms are approached. Jo Grimond put it well:

Opinion polls are carefully analyzed as guides to (popular ideas), elaborate research is done on sociological sub-climates. Meanwhile it is tacitly assumed that the framework of the system cannot be altered...No wonder that there is alienation. 49

No wonder indeed.

Politics in England. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1964).

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Footnotes

The research for this section was gathered during the nine months during 1967-1968 when the author was in the United Kingdom. Interviews were conducted with Members of Parliament, party officials and others. On the topic of M.P.'s mail see also Karl A. Friedmann, Parliamentary Affairs (XXI:1), Winter 1967-1968, p.38-39.

For a personal account of the problem in Nigel Nicolson, People And Parliament (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1958), Chap 2 and 3.

It is also clear that more research needs to be done into the content of Members' mail. No statistical studies of these constituency communications have come to light and one is forced to rely on the anecdotal comments of individual M.P.s as well as similar findings by other researchers. However, inquiry into this field is limited by the fact that, for the most part, Members regard their mail as confidential and do not make a practice of revealing it openly to students of politics.

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Footnotes

Political Science Review, (LVI:2), 1962, p.364 (Table 1-A).

15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p.365.
17. Ibid., p.360.
18. Ibid., p.368.
19. Ibid., p.364
20. See Richard Rose, Politics In England, op. cit, Chap. 8.
21. Ibid., p. 181
22. Ibid., p. 173. "The proportion of the population actually seeking to establish contact with M.P.s is small. Of 117 persons interviewed in the life history survey, only 11 had contacted an M.P., usually by letter. Most of these communications did not concern matters of public policy, but rather the adjustment of minor administrative decisions that affected individuals personally..."
23. William Gregory, "Let The People Choose", New Statesman (LXXVII:1976), Jan. 24, 1968, p.1118.
24. Richard Rose, "Voters Show Their Scepticism of Politicians", The Times, April 9, 1968, p.11.
25. Richard Rose, Politics In England, op.cit., p.187.
26. Ibid., p.167, citing Samuel H. Beer in "The Representation of Interests In British Government", American Political Science Review, (LI:3), p. 645-650.
27. Maxwell Fyfe Report, p.28, cited by Robert McKenzie, British Political Parties, (London: H.E.B. Paperback Edition, 1963), p.259.
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29. Ibid.
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35. James K. Pollock, op.cit., p.167.
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37. Nigel Nicolson, op.cit.,p.18.
38. Peter Bromhead, "How Should Parliament Be Reformed?", Political Quarterly (XXX:3), July-Sept., 1959, p.274.
39. The Times, leading article, May 27, 1968.
40. The Times, June 12, 1968, p.4.
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45. Peter Campbell, "Psephology In Britain And France", Political Studies, Vol.V., 1957, p.192.
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47. Peter Campbell, op. cit., p. 193.
48. David Hennessy, "The Communication of Conservative Policy 1957-1959", Political Quarterly, (XXXII:3), Sept, 1961, p.255.
49. Jo Grimond, op. cit, p. 627.

Chapter Three

The Labour Party And The Gap

In

Reverse Communications

Well... there is certainly a need for a
re-think here...

A Labour Party Official

The Labour Party And The Gap In

Reverse Communications

The Labour party has a lesser response to the entire problem of the communication gap than have the Conservatives; the reason is not that the gap is any less extant within Labour, but that little has been done about it. It has been said that since World War II the Labour party has had to adjust to success and the Conservative party to adversity, and in some respects this is true. A more precise statement might be that the Attlee government succeeded in bringing to the institutions of the working class the same sacrosanct air that had previously been limited to the more traditional bastions of British life. What was gained was the recognition of a powerful collective force within the nation, a force which had previously been more confined in its influence. Since it was the recognition of the collective force of the individual members of the working classes that had been the Labour objective for so long, it is perhaps understandable that the party has not been tremendously concerned with the importance of the individual apart from his collective group. But the intellectual stagnation on this point which exists within that party can rightly be seen as a defect of great dimension in the long run.

The Labour party's orientation has traditionally been of an activist nature which itself implies the strong involvement of individual members in the constituency associations. Similarly, the direction of the local parties has been the municipal as opposed to the parliamentary level. But the distinction drawn in the last chapter between the activist elements and the general membership pertains to the constituency Labour party (after

this, the CLP) particularly. Each of the CLPs is composed of individual members, members of affiliated trade unions and cooperative societies arranged on a hierarchical basis from the ward level up. As such the CLP lends itself well to activist involvement and therefore to activist domination. Part of the Labour mythology is the emphasis given to 'enthusiastic involvement' on the part of the local members, but most students of modern British politics have spoken of the fact that mass membership rolls are no gauge of involvement; they have also pointed out that participation in the work of the party is apt to be a function of a distinct minority of the membership at any level. Even at the CLP's most basic level, that of the ward party, involvement is limited:

The majority of ward meetings tend to be meetings of a select coterie... usually only the left attends... and then, little is said about policy... The important policy discussions take place in a favored public house or club. There the ward committee will be found most nights of the week... and there the serious business of politics is discussed. 1

The democracy of the CLP was, and is, shown to be problematical from another aspect as well. Recruitment of new members is, to put it mildly, understressed. Only in the most marginal constituencies is there enough competition from the other side to ensure an active search for new members and as has been seen, the number of marginal constituencies in Britain is not great. Professor H.J. Hanham points out that it is the shop steward who remains the greatest single recruiter for Labour and that as a result of that type of membership the CLPs have a large nominal membership and not much else. Dr. Mark Abrams relates a recent incident in which a regional

agent of the Labour party managed to recruit three new party members only to find that Transport House had been out of membership forms for the previous six months and had apparently been unaware of the deficiency in all that time. It would seem that no great emphasis is placed on potential party supporters contracting in.

This brief sketch of the Labour party organization at the local level is enough to permit one to make a few generalizations about CLP efficiency. These few generalizations might in fact be summed up in one generalization which would be that the CLP as an electoral machine is ineffective, and that it certainly does not serve as a communications link between the government and the people, a point made earlier. That the CLPs are in a state of organizational decrepitude should be no surprise for the Labour party has on several occasions since the end of World War II attempted to improve them, while commenting on their general lack of effectiveness. But in examining these efforts at improvement as possible attempts to bridge the communications gap one searches in vain for the slightest recognition of the real problem in a conference speech or a party document. What attempts have been made at organizational improvement, both nationally and locally, have been measures designed to put the party on a level of professional excellence comparable to that of the Tories. It will be remembered that 'professionalism' was one of the possible causes cited as a reason for the communications gap.

It is generally recognized that the Wilson Report of 1955 was the first Labour response to the postwar political situation. Not only had the Attlee government brought recognition to the institutions of the working class

ses, it had given Labour its first chance to manipulate the levers of power, if that is the phrase, that had largely been the preserve of the Conservatives in the twentieth century. The civil service bureaucracy had for six years been the servants of a Socialist government; consequently the Ministries could be used for many of the functions, notably propaganda, previously assigned to Transport House. The effect was to demoralize the local parties, which were allowed to deteriorate into a pitiful state over the next six years. By 1954, and after the Labour defeats in two elections in three years, the need for change became obvious and the Wilson Committee was set up on June 22, 1955. In announcing the formation of the group, party leader Hugh Gaitskell said:

We must recognize that we have deficiencies in organization. The Conservatives have...in every constituency at least one full time agent, and in the marginal seats they have more than one. I am told that they are now likely to have two or three full time organizers in every marginal seat. We are never likely to be able to have the kind of expensive organization they have. 4

He might have added that Labour might not be able to have as expensive an organization as the Conservatives, but they could certainly try.

It should be noted that this first major change in party organization was not specifically directed at encouraging the individual in his involvement with the party, nor even in making the CLP more responsive to the needs of its supporters; it had as its main goal the creation of a party machine capable of winning elections. The Wilson Committee went about its investigations with the idea that since they had lost the last election by the minimal total of one and a half million votes all that needed to be done was to ensure that Labour supporters would vote on polling day - victory would

To get the backing for a new electoral machine it became necessary to get the specific backing from the trade union leaders. Accordingly Labour party leaders met with three hundred executive officials from eighty unions at Southport on September 4, 1955, and asked for a 75,000 pound increase in party funds for the massive reorganization foreseen in the committee's interim report. It was reported that,

The Labour Party leaders were so encouraged by their reception that they will now prepare detailed plans for improvement in organization, including financial help to enable marginal constituencies to engage full time agents. They will present these plans to the annual party conference at Margate (in October).

If the party was to have a professional organization it would have to pay for it and the reaction of the union leaders was clearly that they were sold on the idea that elections could be won by technical expertise in the party organization.

When the recommendations of the Wilson Committee became public they were very nearly what they were expected to be. The Times, nothing loath, took the following editorial stance:

The truth is that these mechanical explanations, carried too far, are just soothing syrup, balm for the party's wounded pride after its first falling off at the polls for so many years. All that is wanted it is implied, is to put everything right by putting in the public relations and efficiency experts, and everything will be all right.

The mechanical explanations were chiefly concerned with electoral strategy and intra-party efficiency but nowhere are there recommendations for improving the communications apparatus from the ground up, except for a hazy suggestion that the party organization should be decentralized and 'refur-

bished' 7 That this should be so is hardly surprising given the thrust of the movement toward reform, the nature of which was started from the top down. Not only that, but it stated categorically that the volunteer force of activists at the local level needed help from the professional party organizers if they were to be effective in winning elections. Victory at the polls was what was needed and the answer was professionalism at all levels.

Shortly after the report was made public leading scholars were quick to point out its potential implications for the party system and democracy in general. H.J. Hanham noted that the changes would affect a shift in emphasis from the municipal to the parliamentary, an object which would be accomplished by making the CLP more centralized in its authority, authority which would most likely be wielded by the new professional element 8 Professor Gerhard Loewenberg was equally perceptive in stressing that,

The beneficiaries of change will almost certainly be the parliamentary leaders, who will find in the new professionally organized parties not special interests to be contended with but supporters of their own views; not a cadre of militants but a group naturally sharing with the parliamentary leadership a concern for the party's electoral position. Out of compelling electoral considerations democracy within the party stands to lose its reality still further. 9 (Italics mine)

In the light of the Wilson recommendations Professor Robert T. McKenzie wrote:

The situation would appear to call for at least as drastic a party reorganization as that undertaken by Henderson and Webb in 1917-18. No doubt the party must... discover some means of ensuring that its constituency membership approximates to a cross section of the Labour voters. 10

Each of these three comments illustrates one aspect of the problem that began to plague Labour in the mid-1950's and which plagues it still, a problem generally labelled as a lack of democratic impulse within the party structure, but infinitely more complex than that. There was first the predominance of the Parliamentary Labour Party (the PLP) and the view that the local associations had as their primary purpose the election of the local Labour M.P. Secondly there was the professional element to make the first premise a reality. These 'professional activists' were to serve not as communication links nor as articulators of local needs, but were to be concerned with winning elections. Then there was the idea that these professional activists would not be representative of their communities, of the voters in the area who gave Labour their support, a problem which Hugh Gaitskell was perceptive enough to see.

The Wilson Report was presented to the Margate Party Conference as planned but in the years that followed its recommendations were not fully implemented. There was, however, a steady growth in the professional element of the party that made the implications voiced above pertinent. Labour party officials found that they could still manage to lose elections in spite of the fact that their organizational tableau was neater than before; and they were inclined to look for new answers over and above reorganization. One of the new answers which presented itself by the end of the decade was the use of opinion polls and market research techniques in political advertising. In 1960, Dr. Mark Abrams, head of Research Services, Ltd., conducted a private survey and published the results in a book entitled Must Labour Lose?, a work which was to have a profound influence. What it said

as that Labour was out of touch with a segment of the electorate to whom the class struggle was an anachronism, those 'socially mobile' members of the lower middle class and upper working class. Labour's image was in serious need of change with that group whose support had to be critical to Labour election hopes. The book received wide currency in the upper echelons of the Labour party -presumably in those of the Conservatives as well- and thus began a kind of movement toward scientific electoral techniques in the Labour party.

It can be argued, at times even coherently, that the use of electoral technology constitutes a type of reverse communications, and that the political leaders can in fact be made aware at all times of what the electorate are thinking. However possible it may be to exaggerate this charge, the use of polls merits close attention as a possible method of bridging the gap. Between 1960 and 1962 the Labour leaders were not preoccupied with closing the gap but with examining methods for exploiting the polls for electoral purposes. Dr. Abrams made them aware of such important concepts as 'image' and 'target voters' and his research during that period helped identify the classes to which Labour hoped to appeal. During 1963 and 1964 further investigation helped the party plan its electoral tactics, some of which paid off in the general election of 1964. In bracketing the critical votes which Labour needed and then finding out what mattered most to those voters, the effectiveness of the Labour presentation was undoubtedly enhanced. Possibly as a result of that success the position of the psephologist has become more established, as indeed it was in America in the presidential election of 1960. Since Labour used the new methods to advantage

and appeared to have stumbled across a way of ending the communications gap, why then does not this chapter deal at length with their efforts and declare the gap to be bridged?

The answer is that the Labour party has since stagnated in its search for new methods of winning elections and it has never fully recognized the need for extensive individual communications. Worse yet, it has fallen behind the Conservatives in the matter of electoral sociology, a topic dealt with at some length below. The result has been that the new professionalism has not been guided by local opinion as much as it might have; with the use of polls and other methods of opinion tabulation it might have been possible to penetrate the party bureaucracy with the hard evidence of popular thought, a stimulus otherwise barred from the rarefied atmosphere of a central office. Mark Abrams, who is in a position to know, in 1963 posited some reasons for Labour's lack of initiative in making use of the polls, reasons which, despite the success of the new methods, were apparently strong enough to keep things at a standstill. They bear repeating here.

Dr. Abrams found that a 'romantic' view pervaded some Labour politicians and their political consciousness, a view which might be compromised by quantification. Allied to this was a reliance on anecdotal information gathered by the individual politician at meetings or through personal contacts. Others preferred to get their information primarily through the news media, presumably because it was available to their constituents as well as themselves. Another group, playfully labelled as narcissistic, simply preferred their own view of the matter over anything the polls could tell them. Ideology crept in with the view of the more doctrinaire Marxists

that bourgeois politics were irrelevant since capitalist society was soon to crumble and little could be gained by going to such lengths to chart its decline. Another ideological point is more familiar; it posits that it is a betrayal of Labour tradition to go a-whoring after electoral success since Labour is a party of principles which are rationally self-evident. A more pragmatic stand approaches the use of polls as a tactical evil because the information revealed in them might lend one wing of the party an advantage over the other in the determination of policy. Many party officials are apparently unwilling to make more extensive use of the polls because Labour's financial resources are limited and there is the attitude that the money could be better spent elsewhere. Abrams labels as pure ignorance as one reason for the dismissal of polls, since few Labour politicians have had business experience which makes extensive use of market research; the Conservatives have had such experience and this has given them an edge in their research techniques. But probably the most cogent reason listed for the Labour reluctance is that there is no adequate machinery within the party to make effective use of the polls, both from the standpoint of directing their institution and making use of their findings. Apparently the Transport House machinery is inefficient in making the polls work effectively.

In elaborating on this last and most important point Abrams commented:

Under these circumstances there was no point in commissioning public opinion research; even if it had been the best in the world and even if it had cost nothing, it would still have been a wasted effort. And, in the last resort, it was an awareness of this futility that killed any remnants of interest in the subject in 12

These difficulties found by Dr. Abrams in his dealings with the Labour party and the fact of Labour stagnation were borne out by research interviews with Labour party officials made by this author in 1968. One of the facts brought forward in these sessions concerned the use of polls. It was pointed out that the Labour party had used both polls and market research techniques in special circumstances and for specific purposes, much like the American practice. A more continuing use of such polls, particularly between elections, was not envisaged, perhaps for the reason that Dr. Abrams mentioned. It is this fact of specific usage and not continuous study of polls which might account for the otherwise inexplicable optimism of Butler and King in their chapter on the Labour research methods in 1964, viz., "... the vocabulary and thought of several National Executive members seemed permeated with the surveys' conclusions. It is simply hard to believe that a continuous flow of information concerning the electorate's interests, hopes and fears made little impact on a group of men and women increasingly preoccupied with electoral matters." 13

The continuous use of opinion polls, constituency surveys and census data in conjunction with local political activity has achieved some attention in British politics, so much so that a study of its use in the Conservative party takes up a major portion of the next chapter. Electoral sociology or, as it is called in Britain, demography and psephology, has seemingly escaped the notice of the Labour party. What consciousness there is of its possibilities is lost in a welter of obfuscation and scepticism which does not quite conceal a lack of initiative. The party's Director of Publicity, though conversant with past Labour efforts in the field, at least

claimed total ignorance of Conservative projects in psephology. The Director of Studies was able to cloud the issue even further. There was a 'need for a re-think here', but 'you can't relate market research to polling day effort'.¹⁴ Furthermore the use of market research did not in itself imply any corresponding need for mechanical adjustment of the party organization, either nationally or locally.

In another personal interview, Dr. Abrams mentioned two possible reasons for the Labour stagnation in psephology, both reminiscent of his summation of their reluctance to use polls at all. The first cause was a lack of money, although Dr. Abrams pointed out that the party was just sitting on a reserve fund of some seven million pounds in "gilt-edged securities" that might have been pressed into service. Probably the most significant reason for the inaction was due to personalities within the hierarchy of the party leadership. Both the party chairman and the secretary were reluctant to do anything along these lines and consequently nothing was done. Since 1964 and the Labour victory the Government were content to use the Ministries with their public relations officers to get their points across without bothering about elaborate party programs to accomplish the same ends; and so "Transport House sits and sleeps" ¹⁵

It seems as if every time that the Labour party has an advantage they are not happy until they have squandered it and are faced with disaster and repudiation. Such was the case following the party's victory in 1945 when the local organization was allowed to crumble during the enjoyment of power; this paved the way for what is alleged to have been thirteen years of Tory misrule. When the Socialists did have the good fortune to exploit a new

method of electoral aggrandizement in 1964, the fruits of victory were once more allowed to become stale. If the response in the short run has become stale, the response in the long run has never been made or even faced. Consequently the fundamental need for reform within the party has gone largely unnoticed, although the appearances of change have been made; but little of substance has been accomplished by way of making the party more responsive to the needs of the people who vote for it.

The communications apparatus within the party remains as stultified and as stratified as before. The gathering of information is still a responsibility of the nearly autonomous CLP, which conducts whatever investigations it may be prodded into without any overt help from the central office. When information is needed by the CLP contacts are made with the unions, and it is probable that the union point of view will be a collation of views within the union's own hierarchy. The only concessions thrown to science by the CLP studies are minimal indeed; primary use is made of the party canvass and the electoral register, both devices which are notoriously imprecise. These investigations are almost entirely for the purpose of enabling the CLP to better mobilize its polling day efforts and little in this line is done between the periods of electoral tension.

The gap between the party activists and the general members is likely to vary from constituency to constituency, probably depending as much on the size of the party's majority - or the lack of it - as on geographical and political features. The criticisms of the activist and the professional activist in their growing predomination in the CLPs have already been noted. The only needs to be added here that the national organization keeps in

touch with the CLPs by means of some forty regional agents who are full time employees of Transport House. It is generally claimed that these agents are effective in channeling popular ideas to the top, but it is difficult to see how. They are in touch with what we have seen to be unrepresentative groups which constitute the CLP leadership and it is primarily from this group that the agent will be getting his information, which may or may not be accurate. The argument generally heard against this view is that the CLP is probably as representative of the people who attend its meetings as those who do not attend its meetings - an argument most probably used for lack of anything better to say. It is contradicted in fact by the frank admission of the party's Director of Publicity that if he had to get in touch with the three quarters of a million Labour party members he would have no idea where to begin; the only thing that might be done was to contact the CLPs and "hope for the best".¹⁶

The gap in reverse communications that exists within the Labour party is further illustrated by considering the attenuation of the CLP influence, a criticism which was pointed out in the last chapter as being generally one of the party system. This limitation of influence is more subtle than it might be were the reality expressed in the mechanics of the organization. But the shift of emphasis from the municipal to the parliamentary level by the CLP has made the Parliamentary Labour Party an entity almost apart from the Labour movement and certainly so from the CLP. As suggested by the earlier criticisms of the Wilson Report, the CLP has become a machine for the winning of elections and not a forum for the discussion of policy. The shift of emphasis away from the municipal does not render entirely surprising the steady loss of Labour control of local government. With this gradual

limitation of influence has come a corresponding rise in Labour apathy and a growing sense of frustration by the activists. Aware as they are that what little influence they have is steadily compromised by the new party professionalism the activists have become increasingly leftist and, therefore, irrelevant. This has in turn forced many concerned Members to ignore their CLPs and try to accomplish things outside of the party organization.

It would thus appear that Labour has inherited the worst of both worlds, since its new professionals have not been perceptive enough to realize that their job should be to augment the voluntary organization and notto obliterate it. Nor have their techniques been sufficiently sophisticated to enable them to make their implementation worthwhile so as to offset some of the disadvantages of having a professional set of managers. Apparently Labour's organization has all of the drawbacks of the new professionalism with only a few of its advantages. And as a result what was a gap in reverse communications within the Labour party has now widened into a chasm which not even the professionals exalted in the hierarchy can long afford to ignore.

Chapter Four

The Conservative Response

While communication within the active Party is reasonably good, communication between the eleven million at the base of the pyramid and various segments at the top is in some cases poor and in others non-existent. This is a paramount problem which our Party has got to solve. How do we communicate with and identify ourselves with the eleven million or so potential Tory voters?

op.cit., p. 790

op.cit., p. 790

Briefing Paper For

op.cit., p. 791

Conservatives' Project '67

John King
Macmillan,

Address?
Union

Technical Assistance for the
Port House, 1968

Report House,

Footnotes

1. H.J. Hanham, "The Local Organization of the British Labour Party", Western Political Quarterly, (IX:2) June, 1956, p.386
2. See Hanham, op.cit, p.386
3. Dr. Mark Abrams, in a personal interview, London Press Exchange, May 31, 1968
4. Hugh Gaitskell, The (London) Times, June 20, 1955, p.4
5. The Times, September 4, 1955, p. 8
6. The Times, September 28, 1955, leading article
7. For a full account of the recommendations of the Wilson Report, beyond the purview of this study, see Gerhard Loewenberg, "The British Constitution And The Structure Of The Labour Party", American Political Science Review, (LII:3) 1958, p. 771-790 and also H.J. Hanham, op.cit
8. H.J. Hanham, op.cit, p.790
9. Gerhard Loewenberg, op.cit, p. 790
10. R.T. McKenzie, "The Wilson Report And The Future Of The Labour Party", Political Studies, Vol. IV, 1956, p.97
11. Much of what follows in this section is taken from the excellent account of the Labour efforts presented by D.E. Butler and Anthony King in their book, The British General Election of 1964, (London: Macmillan, 1965) p.66-71
12. This section and its attendant quotation are drawn from Dr. Abrams' article "Public Opinion Polls And Political Parties" Public Opinion Quarterly, (XXVII:1) Spring, 1963, p.14-18
13. D.E. Butler and Anthony King, op.cit., p. 71
14. Mr. Walter Brown, Director of Studies and Technical Assistant for the Labour party, in a personal interview, Transport House, May 22, 1968
15. Dr. Mark Abrams, in a personal interview, op.cit.
16. Mr. Percy Clark, Director of Publicity for Labour party, Transport House, May 22, 1968

The Conservative Response

After Labour's victory in 1945, the Conservative party faced their own future with some doubt. Not only had the party been defeated at the polls, but it seemed that the whole of the Tory philosophy had been repudiated as well in the demand for sweeping social change which brought the Labourites into power. More than one voice within the Conservative Parliamentary party expressed doubts as to the relevance of a conservative party in a country which had embraced socialism. In retrospect all of the hand-wringing by the Tories seems slightly hysterical, and the reports of that party's demise were, to paraphrase Mark Twain, exaggerated. The reason why the Conservatives have been in power for thirteen of the twenty-four years since Britain was formally committed to some socialist ideals is because the party has shown itself competent to direct the movement for reform. Although Labour has not converted its opponents, as some have said, it has forced its opponents to change their approach to the people and to themselves, the kind of change that is entirely consistent with the evolving nature of British parliamentary practice as stressed in the first chapter of this paper.

It was not only the blunt fact of a Labour victory at the polls which forced a change in Conservative philosophy; in fact, in many ways the general election of 1945 was the least significant event of the postwar period as it represented the final stage in a social movement which had begun nearly thirty years before. What was more important was the changed social situation which made Labour rule possible and the changes in the tradition-

al institutions that came as a result of this sine qua non. Allen Potter has pointed out that the working class institutions gained an importance which they had never before enjoyed and which placed them on an equal power footing with the rest of society 1 What was less obvious but just as vital was the extent to which the class structure was changing. The old appeal which the Conservatives had been making to the entrenched middle and upper middle classes was a message which had little or no relevance for the 'socially mobile' classes which floated between the defined borders of class. Richard Rose has cited surveys conducted by the British Institute of Public Opinion indicating that of the two-thirds of the nation categorized as working class, "less than half of those interviewed place themselves in the working class" 2 Not only were these workers in a socially ambiguous position, they were in a politically ambiguous position, and it became the purpose of the Tories to woo those votes as actively as they might.

The Conservatives were also forced to respond to the Labour challenge by refurbishing their organization. Since the established structure of British society, which had for so long been a tacit ally of the Tories, had been undermined by the strength of the Socialist appeal, the Conservatives were obliged to build up the more formal part of the electoral machinery. Thus the trend toward the dominance of the Central Office already noted was dramatically speeded up. The party, having been thrown back on its own resources, met the need to restructure the party organization and its own image in a sweeping series of changes carried out by Lord Woolton. The announced aim of incorporating the new social classes into the Conservative consciousness was also accomplished, so well in fact that Leon D.

Epstein was to write in 1954 that,

So far the postwar Conservative party's most impressive political accomplishment has not been any such gain at Labour's expense, but rather the organization of that part of the electorate already predisposed to its cause. In bringing into the fold of active membership large numbers of ordinarily passive supporters and in getting to the polls the maximum of potential voters, the party machinery proved to be a model of efficiency. 3

The organization of these predisposed voters as the first part of the Conservative response.

The second part of that response is in the communication that goes on not only between the marginal voter in the marginal constituency and the political machine, but also the more generalized kind of communication which a party may expect to hear from those people whose allegiance it holds or seeks to encourage. In dealing with great groups of the electorate and with the electorate as a whole, the Conservative party has in recent years been exploiting political advertising to a great degree. The idea has been to make the voters able to exercise a more competent choice by presenting the party line in a more cogent fashion, the assumption being that the Conservative principles are rationally self-evident. One Conservative official even went so far as to point out:

Constituency militants in particular are prone to overlook the limitations of political communication in the optimistic belief that if the publicity is good enough it will make up for any deficiencies in the appeal of what is being communicated. 4

There are many difficulties in this kind of approach to an electorate, some of which will be dealt with below; but it should be said at this point that political advertising will not of itself be sufficient to close the

reverse communications gap, and indeed may widen it. The essence of the Conservative response is found in the use of modern market research methods as an indicator of social thought and belief, an indicator which will not be limited in its usage to specific situations or ad hoc questions but will instead provide a continuing reservoir of information about the people being represented. Here again the evolutionary pattern of change so endemic to British politics is evident, because the attempt to close that gap in reverse communications is the beginning of a new model of representation in the parliamentary system.

Part One

The first stirrings of the Conservative response followed close on the heels of the defeat of the National Government in 1945. One of Winston Churchill's immediate acts was to appoint Lord Woolton as Chairman of the Party Organisation in 1946. Lord Woolton took over as Chairman during a time when there was much talk within the party about the necessity of restructuring the whole apparatus of the organisation, and it was under his direction that the party, now in Opposition for the first time in a generation, set its own house in order. Polls had been used in Britain since 1932 on a limited basis and they now showed a significant portion of the electorate disinclined to identify itself with the overt interests of the working class as defined by either of the two major parties. It became the object of the Conservatives to attract the support of these floating voters who were thought to be oriented toward the party by virtue of economic circum-

stance. These voters were usually characterized as either low paid clerks or skilled artisans and industrial workers, all of whom had accumulated either an economic or a psychological stake in the traditional side of British political life. Their allegiance might conceivably result in a Conservative victory in the next general election.

There were two primary methods used to attract this support. The first was at the national level where policies attractive to potential Tory voters were to be formulated. The second was more intriguing. It involved fattening the party's membership rolls by using the constituency parties to recruit supporters in the local communities. In this effort the old-line activists were aided by a more resolute attitude on the part of that section of the middle and upper middle classes that perceived socialism as a direct threat to its existence. As a result of this fact, and because the activists went about their duties with some zeal, party membership grew. Allen Potter points out that during this period the constituency associations developed as never before and that the paid staffs of the local associations were increased to help direct the new membership potential.

The increase in the number of staff personnel available to the local parties is indicative of the concomitant growth of the professional party machine. Popular membership would have meant nothing had there not been the professional staff at the top to direct it, and under Lord Woolton this staff was being increased and re-organized. Organization at all levels was being augmented. During the period 1945-51 the Conservative Research Department experienced an influx of young men who became influential in the party councils as they prepared the information for the use of the lead-

ership and the machine. Party policy was much helped by their efforts, as was the quality of Opposition debate in the House. It is worth noting in passing that their influence survived only so long as the party was out of power, and that when the Tory leadership once again had the Civil Service to prepare its briefs and research its reports the Research Department had its wings clipped.⁶ But the professional staff of the party received much attention during this period and the reforms made under Lord Woolton were primarily responsible for the edge in organizational competence which the Tories continued to enjoy during the next decade.

The reforms and administrative innovations made by Lord Woolton were the object of a study commission formed in 1948 under the leadership of Sir David Maxwell Fyfe. The committee made its report in 1949, concerning itself mainly with defining what had already been accomplished while making some few recommendations as to what might be done in the future to carry forward the changes already made. The report recognized, for example, that the party conference had largely failed as a method for allowing the rank and file a voice in the determination of party policy. "The size of the conference made it "a demonstration of strength and enthusiasm" and made impossible "the more intimate circumstances necessary to thoughtful debate"⁷ But the most important aspect of the Maxwell Fyfe Report lay in its attempt to link Central Office and the party organisation with the National Union. This was an attempt to integrate the voluntary and the professional sections of the party; but it is significant that in so doing, the voluntary sections remained in a subordinate position in fact if not in theory.⁸

The party organization was at once becoming more popular and more professional and though the nature of that subordinate gap was not then apparent, the larger chasm that separates party and people was being explored in a halting manner, but not by the parties themselves. There had been some use of polls before 1945, but it was their use in that year and their subsequent importance in political forecasting that made possible much of what has become the Conservative response. Advertising was being integrated into the use of polls with studies being made on target voters and the appropriate kind of advertisements made up to appeal to the bracketed sector of the electorate. Dr. Mark Abrams has written of the period:

(One) development in those early years was that some advertisers and some advertising agencies began to widen considerably their consumer surveys and to develop an interest in the 'why' as well as the 'how' of popular behavior. This...was of considerable importance when the Conservative party began to employ an advertising agency and have turned, almost fortuitously, to one (Coleman, Prentis & Varley) that had played an important part in the post-war expansion of market research. 9

According to Dr. Abrams, the Conservatives were increasingly interested in the possible use of market research techniques as political tools, probably because their utility was demonstrable in the business world. There was however a reluctance to make use of the new techniques, even after they had approached Coleman, Prentis and Varley. The Tories were, apparently, 'interested only at a dilettante level'. They were to remain dilettantes until 1951.

Part Two

The general election of 1951 must be considered remarkable if for no other reason than that the Conservatives won it. The reasons for their victory were many and they have been explored in other studies; what pertains to the present topic is the lack of effect which the much vaunted changes carried out in the party organization seemed to have had on the outcome of the election. D.E. Butler in the Nuffield study for that year wrote of a post-election Gallup survey which showed that only five per cent of the Conservative voters had canvassed for their candidate; the corresponding figure for Labour voters was three per cent. He then wrote:

These claims can hardly be accepted in the light of reports coming in from the constituencies; the total numbers actively engaged in the campaign seem in most cases to have been much smaller. 10

But with victory in their grasp the point must have seemed academic to the Tory leadership for they progressed with their recruiting drive in the constituencies on the same basis for at least the next four years. The use of opinion polls was largely shelved during the period between 1951 and 1955, and its possible use as a link between the voluntary and professional levels of the party was not remotely contemplated. 11

That same four year period appears to have been one of consolidation rather than innovation within the party organization, with the emphasis being placed upon the gradual improvement of the professional staff which was by now demonstrably superior to that of the Labourites. The deliberate infusion of active volunteers represented a threat to the traditional

Labour supremacy in that area and by 1954 the respected Robert McKenzie observed that Labour's comparative advantage had been wiped out. "The Conservatives now have a greater number of 'inspired amateurs' working in the constituencies alongside their superior professional organization" 12 Other commentators also noted the growth of the party's professional staff but felt it was more than offset by the increased party membership. Leon Epstein in particular felt that the activists were keeping pace with not only the professional staff but also with the increasing influence of the mass media as well 13 It was still a part of the conventional wisdom to think of constituency activists as political communicators.

An excellent study of the Conservative constituency associations conducted by Allen M. Potter in 1956 found that many changes had taken place in the postwar decade and summarized them. He found that more members of the associations were actively involved in the functions and governance of the local units, and he noted that a larger group in the association now passed judgment on prospective parliamentary candidates; this was indicative of "a significant shift of power within the local organizations". In part the changes were also due to election law reforms which placed restrictions upon the amounts of money which single contributors could donate, restrictions which gave an added impetus to the moves to broaden the base of the associations. In addition substantial boundary changes in the constituencies were also a part of the Representation of the People Act. What was necessary was that "a greater number of members...had to be given some sense of participation in the control of the associations" 14 With the broadening of the party's financial base more people of humble means could take

part in decisions more actively on the executive council of the association, with the dominance of the well-to-do members on the financial committees somewhat curtailed.

One of the striking observations of Potter's study is of interest not so much for itself as for its implications on what has been happening more recently. It will be remembered that when the Conservatives dallied with democracy in the mid nineteenth century there was a concerted effort to impress workers directly into the local organization for the express purpose of portraying the Tories as the true party of the downtrodden. Potter found over a century later that a similar trend was in operation and for precisely the same reason. Labelling the integration of the workers into the organizations as a "striking superficial change", he went on to describe how the associations would normally have socially prominent local personages displayed at party functions like so many prize cabbages; but this was no longer so true.

Now the leaders (of the local associations) are often much more anxious to have a few trade unionists. Tales are told, and of area organizers ordering: 'Cut out Colonel Blank, We don't want any showpieces on the platform*'; but it is nearer the truth to say different showpieces are wanted. 15
*The Guardian, Feb. 3, 1950

There was some doubt as to the sincerity with which these trade unionists were recruited, since Potter found that "this new facade" was limited to either the hopeless or the marginal constituencies; he also noted that in safe seats the trade unionists were still shunned.

All of this deliberate appeal for working class votes was a part of the larger Tory strategy mentioned above. But the Conservatives at that

point seem to have fallen back upon an old ruse of hustling workers into the forefront of the local organization; it was an action for which there was a precedent in party practise, although admittedly to be used only in dire necessity and sparingly even then. What is significant about this attempt in the more modern context is that it represents the first halting step towards the deliberate restructuring of the association membership to correspond to the party's attempts to attract certain kinds of voters. It is all very well to have groups of target voters and better yet to gear a policy which may specifically enlist their support; but how much better still to create a party structure which reflects this slant in its personnel at the local level. In starting on that road the Conservatives in the nineteen-fifties were advancing, however disingenuously and however unknowingly, on a road which may yet move them to a different pattern of representation.

The changes that had been made in the constituency associations and in the party's professional organization seemed in the mid nineteen-fifties to have produced a happy marriage of professionalism and voluntarism; and whatever deficiencies there may have been were beneath notice so long as the party was winning elections. At any rate there was no reason to challenge the old idea of party activists as political communicators and to ask whether this was true in fact. Similarly there were only feeble attempts to improve communications between the party activists and the professional staff, this despite the increased role of the local and regional agents as interlocutors. In 1956, however, the party became seriously divided over the Suez crisis and Britain's role in it. Leon D. Epstein has written ex-

tensively on the crisis from a scholarly standpoint while Nigel Nicolson has written a more personal version dealing with his dismissal by the local Conservative association for his open disagreement with the Government's policy. These studies have demonstrated that there was serious disagreement within the party rank and file on the Government's Suez policy which was not reflected within Westminster except in a few instances. Certainly the Government's conduct of affairs was not altered by the opposition expressed within the party.

Peter Bromhead wrote of the rigidity of the parliamentary system as shown by the Suez crisis in that there was little response by the leadership to the dissent which was felt by supporters and non-supporters of the Government. Although this was deplorable in itself, the courageous few M.P.s who dared express their opposition publicly received rough handling by their local associations. These men, in this period provide the immediate

were disowned by their constituency associations. The power of the small groups which dominate the constituency associations, particularly in some safe seats, was seen to have grown to an unfortunate extent. 16

However much some later studies of the Suez events may differ in their interpretations it seems beyond doubt that this crisis clearly indicated the need for some alterations in the parliamentary system, particularly at the local level. The power of these local groups had long gone unchallenged, even as a result of the changes in party organization and emphasis. There might have been more dedicated amateurs working in the local parties, but it was quite clear where the power lay: in the hands of the old line activists. The structure of the local parties had not been democratized, it had

just been made to seem that way. Participation had widened; responsibility and power had not. How then could the local associations really claim to be representative of the rank and file or more importantly, how could they claim competence as political communicators? The Suez crisis demonstrated that the Government and the professional organization of the party could be unresponsive, but it also showed that the most basic organizational unit of the party, the local association, could be even more so.

Part Three

The pressures for change within the Conservative party organization that came toward the end of the nineteen-fifties were a result of demonstrated failures and a changing sociological situation. The reforms and innovations which were made by the Tories in this period provide the immediate base for their more recent attempts at initiating wide-spread communication within the party. Even after the disillusionment attendant upon the Suez affair it did not seem that significant change would be forthcoming. On September 18, 1957, Mr. Quintin Hogg, then Lord Hailsham, became the Chairman of the Party Organisation and expressed a traditional view of the function of the organization.

"You have to make people trust you and your opponents respect you... I do not think there is any other way than being trustworthy. I am simply coming here to try to convince people, and make my opponents realize that I am genuinely trying to solve problems and not superficially to attract support." That was the only way to win elections, he said, rather than "chromium-plated organization, enormous funds or a powerful propaganda machine". 17

He did not add that the Tories already had the organization, the funds and the propaganda machine. But there was a need for an appeal which these tools could not of themselves fulfill.

The trend toward the blurring of class distinctions noted ever since World War II was becoming more pronounced. The steady integration of workers into the lower echelons of the middle class went on as before. D.E. Butler and Richard Rose noted the potentially great effect that these 'socially ambiguous' voters might have in their study of the election of 1959. But by 1964 Butler and Anthony King also described a concomitant trend on the part of the median and upper middle classes, long a stronghold of Conservatism. Terming them the new managerial elite the authors noted:

Many such people are politically isolated. They are not in touch with the Labourites yet they are disgruntled by the Tory view that status-seeking and ladder-climbing are the most important human activities...

Clearly something was wrong with the party's image; but more basically there was a need for the Conservatives to "broaden the base of the party at present being eroded by social and occupational change". The socio-economic erosion was also aided by the fact that the Tories had been in power since 1951, and as the decade drew to a close more and more party supporters were growing sceptical of the chances for victory at the next election. Change of some sort would have to come.

While the Conservatives did manage to win in 1959 the need for change was, if anything, underwritten even more strongly than before. Convincing evidence was at hand that the party machinery had not functioned well. Butler and Rose found in their study that full fifty per cent of the electors

had not been approached by the party canvass and seventy percent had not been approached in any form on polling day. Citing a Daily Telegraph survey of marginal seats where the parties' efforts had been particularly strenuous the authors wrote:

... only 23 per cent of the voters said... that they had been visited by the Conservatives in the last four weeks and only 22 per cent by Labour; no less than 57 per cent said that no one had ever called at their house from the Conservative party; 60 per cent said that they had been neglected by the Labour party canvasses. 19

All the efforts aimed at building up a core of activists superior to that of Labour's seemed to be called into serious question, although Tory officials could at least revel in the fact that their activists' efforts had come off a few percentage points better than their rivals.

The movement toward communications improvement within the party also came in for a specific form of attention during the period. In 1957 the Conservative Political Center initiated a discussion program known as the "Two Way Movement of Ideas" 20 In as many constituencies as could be interested in the project, discussion groups were set up. These groups received special pamphlets from Central Office which provided a basis for discussion. Under the scheme reports were sent back to party headquarters by the local groups; these were summarized and forwarded to the Research Department, the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Policy and the Chairman of the Party Organisation. Thus in 1958 there 525 discussion groups which sent in a total of 1,241 reports, hardly an extensive number. The initial impetus for the idea seemed to have been a bona fide attempt to foster better communications within the party structure but there is little evidence to show

that this laudable objective was ever achieved in practice. A little over three years after the project's beginning a critical M.P. was to write of it:

... the CPC run the 'Two Way Movement of Ideas'. It does this by providing material to stimulate discussion within the constituencies, and a return channel along which the views of the party are brought back to the Chairman of the party. Thus one is never sure who is influencing whom. 'The Two Way Movement of Ideas' is a convenient means of discovering and then correcting any misconceptions or disagreements that the rank and file may have acquired. 21

But if the program is to be criticized from the communications standpoint it is not valid to dismiss it simply because it may be a device used to correct the misconceptions of the lower orders. Since it sets up a more direct channel of communications from the people to the leadership it is not inconceivable that those leaders themselves might discover that some of their policies were poorly received and make according adjustments; at any rate the judgment must be made as to the efficacy of the communications channel itself. In this case it seems to have been a fairly direct route from the lowest to the highest echelons of the parliamentary system. The defect in the project lies in the attempt to work with the constituency parties in the mistaken belief that they were representative of their communities. What is more important is that although no studies have come to light showing the makeup of the discussion groups, one would expect to find that they met in their leisure time, which is in itself a significant limitation on the type of people attending the groups. Consequently the value of the discussion reports might be seriously compromised in that the groups which generated them might be no more representative of the constituency - or the

constituency party - as the people who traditionally attend the Tory wine and cheese parties in the local rooms. The fault here is not the channel set up but the access to it. The gap in communications between the party activists and party professionals might have been ameliorated in some respects but the gap in communications between the public at large and the parliamentary leadership was at least as great as before.

There was still a need for the party to communicate with the voters and to have the voters communicate with the party, and the search was on for alternative methods. In the spring of 1957 Mr. Oliver Poole, as party chairman, called upon the firm of Coleman, Prentis and Varley to start a massive propaganda campaign in preparation for the next general election. Mark Abrams points out:

There was an expansion in the funds set aside for political propaganda. Almost from the beginning of this propaganda campaign, Coleman, Prentis and Varley, on their own initiative and without any noticeable encouragement from their client, started to carry out surveys to ascertain how many and what kind of people had seen and read the advertisements and how they had reacted to them... (But) According to one C.P. and V executive the research findings were tabulated and passed on to the client without any critical or interpretative comment. 22

According to Dr. Abrams, the Conservatives underwent a change of heart in 1958 with the publication of a University of Bristol study entitled Marginal Seat, which showed the electoral profit that might be reaped by using the sociology of electoral politics. Not the least of the new book's virtues was its forward, written by R.A. Butler which commended this approach to the party. Under the further impetus of consistent by-election defeats, the party committed itself to the use of market research techniques and electoral sociology.

The Tory victory in 1959 was something more than a public relations triumph; the failures of the party machine have already been noted. The new techniques had a chance to prove themselves and they showed that they worked. If the constituency activists were not getting the message across at the local level, as the evidence seemed to indicate, they at least were capable of being replaced as a prime voter contact method with the judicious use of political advertising. The market research surveys taken by Coleman, Prentis and Varley indicated the 'socially ambiguous' members of the lower middle class should receive the primary emphasis of the party's attention; the concept of the 'target voter' was now endorsed by the party apparatus. Policies favorable to this group of voters were endorsed by the Tory leadership, but the way in which the message was gotten across was almost as significant. There was an expansion in the funds set aside for political advertising, but these advertisements did not deluge the nation's press. The readership of differing sections of the media was carefully analyzed and the appropriate appeal inserted at the proper time. Communication from the top down was now being guided with greater precision than ever before.

The gap in reverse communications was not bridged when the Conservatives started to use their market research techniques, but it was an important step toward the amelioration of it. If polls could determine what the people were thinking then that information could be made available to the party leadership as hard evidence. Changes might then come about as a result, changes either of emphasis or of ideas themselves. The channel of communication was reasonably well defined and open, although it must be ad-

mitted that this kind of communication is, by its very nature, collective and subject to some limitations. Also there are precise methods of verifying the representative validity of any statistical sample: the same cannot be said, of course, of constituency activists. With the representative nature of a poll assured to the communications channel. As a matter of accuracy psephologists are compelled to seek out all points of view or their work is in vain. Consequently the three main elements of political communication seem to be satisfied by the use of polls in the direction of electoral techniques and the formulation of policy. First a channel does exist between the lowest and the highest sections of the parliamentary system which is fairly direct: the only person who comes between the man in the street and the party leader is the psephologist who quantifies the views being expressed. Secondly a message is being transmitted and this method has the added advantage of enabling the leadership to select a particular field of inquiry on which it feels a need for information; the public then transmit their response back through the poll. Thirdly there is a representative verity to statistical samples which is not surpassed, or even approximated, in any other area of the party system.

It must be stressed at this point that the Conservatives were not consciously trying to bridge the communications gap when they became involved in market research techniques. They were looking for a way of winning elections and to do this they needed an idea of what people were thinking; polls seemed the best way. There was definitely not a self-conscious shift into a different pattern of electoral representation. Government by popular opinion or by polls was not, and is not, thought of. It was merely that the

tools of public opinion analysis were available to the party machine and it learned to take advantage of them after 1959. Since that election both major parties have made extensive use of political advertising, although the Conservatives have been in front with their use of market research as a policy indicator. It is now a commonplace to say that the polls are here to stay simply because the fact is so obvious. Poll results make headlines around election time, but now their use is in vogue between elections as well. Participatory democracy may not be a reality for Britain, but with the use of polls has come a greater degree of consultative democracy.

Part Four: Visit to the United States with 1964

Market research did not win the elections of 1964 or 1966 for the Conservatives. But after 1959 both parties were vying for the lead in the use of the new techniques, with Labour's initial advantage in some areas of the art virtually wiped out once the Socialists came to power. Labour stagnated very quickly and although they continued to use polls on an ad hoc basis, little was done to improve communications by their use. The Conservatives on the other hand were forced to look for new methods of communication by the magnitude of their defeat in 1966. It was at this point that one of the most interesting developments in the area of reverse communications came about. All during the years following World War II there were the beginnings of a movement toward the direct representation of the individual in politics. Although often frustrated that movement received a significant boost with some recent Conservative developments. Participation

in an election once every four or five years was deemed not enough; there was a need for the individual to be represented as directly as possible. In part this idea could be seen in the Conservatives' efforts to broaden the base of their constituency associations. It could also be shown by a project such as 'The Two Way Movement of Ideas'. If individual expression had both gained and lost points as the result of having been summarized and quantified by the pollsters, but listened to by the politicians, now there seemed to be a way to use polls and statistics for the purpose of seeking that expression directly from the individual.

Shortly after the Tory defeat in 1966 one of their Vice-Chairmen, Miss Susan Walker, returned from a research visit to the United States with some new ideas for a party re-organisation. Impressed by the efficiency of American constituency profile techniques Miss Walker determined to set up a Conservative program which would have as its prime object the collection of precise statistical data on the nature of each constituency. The idea was an important departure from previous practice. The use of polls in the past had been limited to distinct issues at crucial times. Elections had been the prime target of these surveys and the approach was indicative of a view that an election was an event and not a process. That bit of conventional wisdom was now under direct attack as the Conservatives began, in the latter part of 1966 and early 1967, to assemble a project aimed at influencing opinion at the local level on a day to day basis.

The ideas behind the Conservative Project '67 involved the use of census data on each constituency to determine a profile of the voting populace, the idea being that the local association could use the information to pre-

sent the Conservative case more effectively. But this was not all. It was hoped that the associations could use the statistical data as a measurement of the groups of electors whose votes they hoped to win and re-structure the association accordingly. In re-structuring the constituency parties the Conservatives were making one of the most comprehensive attempts in their history to ally themselves with the working classes. The old Tory idea of using the party structure as an upwards channel of communication was being revived. The changes were to take place gradually but they were to be extensive, or so it was hoped. The party's base was to be broadened once more, this time with the aid of exact science.

The Conservatives have been understandably reluctant to make public a great deal of what they have planned for their constituency associations. Almost the only publication to have emerged from Central Office is a "Speaker's Brief" designed for party officials' reference in their attempts to make the local associations understand something of what will be expected of them. The paper is useful as a summation of points which have intruded themselves most heavily into the Conservative consciousness in the years since 1966. There is first the overt admission that "Market research in itself will not win an election" 23, a comment which says a very great deal if one remembers the optimism after 1959 and the suggestion that constituency parties were becoming obsolete as political communicators. Research surveys might indicate a given state of popular opinion on an issue or a party, but there was an increasing body of evidence to show that the people at the local level were in touch with the evolution and were consequently in a tactically advantageous position to do something about it.

According to the background paper another problem was the floating voter, although that term was not explicitly used. There was, however, evidence to show that large numbers of people who voted for us in 1964 simply did not take the trouble to vote in 1966". So much for motivation. What impeded communication to these vital electors was the structure of the party, not only in terms of its own hierarchy but in the gap between "the eleven million at the base of the pyramid and the various other segments at the top"; communication between these two levels was "in some cases very poor and in others non-existent". The party, in order to survive, had to improve communications between the active party members and the other members of the electorate. At this point there is a serious ambiguity if one takes the statements at their face value. Although it has, for all intents and purposes, just been admitted where the failure in communication lies - within the local parties - the paper suggests that the speaker flatter the local leadership, the party activists on their splendid job. The new methods are to help them do an even better job than before.

It is clear from the context of the paper that the changes will be largely in the party's image. Although increased communications may help that image one has the distinct impression that the bulk of the image changing process must of necessity be carried out at the national level, even if those changes are articulated in a subsidiary sense at the local level. And if the idea of Project '67 were no more than this, that the local people should assist in the public relations area at the local level, it would be justifiable to dismiss the entire idea as simply a minor re-organization, if that. But the report is quite explicit in detailing the

main theme of the project:

The challenge to our Party Organisation is this. Whereas more than half of our support at the polls comes from groups of people who are manual workers, technicians, pensioners and the like, our organisation is not representative of these groups in anything like the same proportions. The difficulty is that in this situation we have got to convince whole groups of people that we do care about them and their problems and that we are the sort of people who are capable of protecting their interests and that the Conservative party is the sort of party for them. 24

What the report was specifically calling for, and what the true object of Project '67 was, was the scientific integration of the working classes into the party organisation in a representative capacity. The lower rung of the new middle class was to be deliberately encouraged to involve itself actively within the party. There was the clear implication that the opinion

It was not that the same thing had not been tried before. What was significant now was the extent to which the use of polls and market research would be allowed to penetrate the local level. Before the use of these techniques became more widely understood it was still possible for the local party leaders to claim that their association was representative of the constituency, which assumed that they had a precise knowledge of their constituencies - and of themselves as well; it hardly needs to be pointed out that this was often not the case. Now the means were at hand to determine a reasonably precise profile of each constituency. Each unit of local government in Britain is equipped with census figures that, taken together, have broad sociological implications, since they refer to tax means, income level, occupation and the like. If one pieces together these statistics from the local units that form a constituency a rather clear picture can be drawn up of the economy and population pattern. With Project '67 the clear plan was to use this type of data in every constituency and to re-

organize the local parties accordingly.

The re-organization would principally come about in two ways. The results of the demographic data might be used by the local association as a guide to what the voters were most likely to be concerned about; then that aspect of the party's policy could be emphasized. This process would help to ensure that the local units were not cranking out propaganda which was irrelevant in a changing constituency. The second adjunct of the project concerned the direct representation of the diverse elements of the constituency in the local party itself. It was hoped that various 'opinion leaders' in each category of voter could be sought out and won to the party's cause. If they could be persuaded to become active party members so much the better, but at first there was the clear implication that the opinion leaders would be contacted to assure a more personalized approach to the party's activities. What was specifically contemplated was an enhancement of "the representative capacity of the existing organisations" in order to make people more likely to view the party as a group of people like themselves, and so lessen the social barriers which are so much a part of the constituency parties as they are presently constituted. If the social distinctions could be ameliorated in this way the path was open for a widening of the party's base of support and the accretion of political impact at the local level.

To support its contentions that the people who supported the party most were those it represented least, the authors of the report included in the supporting papers a survey which clearly demonstrated the validity of their case. It is reproduced below.

Classifications:

- A - 3% of the electorate. Income above 2300 pounds pa.
 B - 9% of the electorate. Income 1000-2300 pounds p.a.
 C1- 18% of the electorate. Income less than 1500 pounds p.a. (non-manual)
 C2- 37% of the electorate. Income 15-25 pounds/week (skilled manual)
 D - 25 % of the electorate. Income 7-15 pounds/week (semi-skilled)
 E - 8% of the electorate. Income less than 7 pounds/ week (poor)

	<u>% of Electorate</u>	<u>% of Group Voting Tory</u>	<u>% of Total Tory Vote in Group</u>	<u>% of Total Tory Party Workers</u>
AB	12)	75)	22)	42)
C1	30	60) 66	47	76
C2	37)	35)	30)	17)
DE	70	30) 33	53	23

As can be seen from column three the Conservative party gets roughly similar amounts of votes from each of these four classes but the groups are very different in size (col.1) and the Conservative party in fact gets the majority of its votes from groups in which it has minority support.

The study document just referred to was brought out in February of 1967. It is deliberately moderate in tone but the moderation does not entirely conceal the far-reaching changes suggested or implied by the entire project. Emphasis was placed on having the local parties develop a whole series of individual contacts within the constituency; opinion leaders, willing housewives and special interest groups. There might very well be some way in which such people could be contacted and involved in some of the party's activities without being actually controlled by the party per se. Neighborhood committees, ad hoc activities and social groups are just three of the many possibilities of mass involvement on this level, involvement which would take place at the behest of the party but would not actu-

ally be a part of the formal party system locally or nationally.

But in a sense this approach begs the question of the representative nature of the constituency associations and their role as political communicators. If more diverse sections of the constituency population can be persuaded to become involved at the local level it is hard to think of the present leadership managing to retain its old position. Nor is this idle speculation. Although nothing of it has appeared in print it seems that the intention of Central Office is to purge the associations of much of the old guard; that, of course, is not the terminology which one hears when discussing the problem with officials of Central Office. Instead there is talk of evolving a new leadership in the constituencies, of replacing the existing leaders as they die off with younger, more capable who will hopefully be more representative of the area than the presently entrenched elite. It is also assumed that the new leaders would be drawn from the ranks of the recently involved opinion leaders. Increasingly there is a deprecation of the old form of activist, the 'retired Colonel' and his coterie and a hope that these entourages can be got rid of quickly whenever and wherever possible. But one also hears of evolved, gradual change and there is no reason to think of Project '67 in any terms but these. There is the hope for initiating the new leadership into party responsibility at all levels, the local as well as the regional and the national, but this will undoubtedly take time.

The objectives of the Project '67 effort are even more significant than its methodology. Individual initiative in politics has once more begun to receive some much deserved attention; this in what is called Britain's

'neo-collectivist' age. The old reliance upon unrepresentative party systems as political communicators were made to serve until they became obsolescent with the use of more direct methods of communicating with electors. The use of polls and market research techniques in politics was a major innovation aimed at a specific kind of communication but hampered by its nature as a 'snap-shot' media. Also the average voter was just as isolated from the processes of government as before, even though he could read in the national press what he, or those of his class, had told the pollsters the week before. The dichotomy between the ad hoc method of using polls and the more continuous method of monitoring public opinion were resolved in many ways with the use of market research methods in conjunction with constituency profile patterns to provide a continuing evolutionary view of public opinion as well as a report of its state at any given moment. The new methods also made possible a rational determination of the constituency as an economic and social unit with all of the implications that such knowledge was bound to have on local party associations.

This new method of approaching the people on an individual level has boundless implications for the party system and the present local party elite. It is to be expected that resistance will be encountered from them and that it may even divide the party. The impetus for the movement toward reform is coming however from the top. Young Members of Parliament and party officials are backed in their desire for reform by the national leaders who see in it a way to revitalize the party structure and enhance its position. Project '67 is only one part of the movement which will undoubtedly have a major impact upon the entire parliamentary system.

Footnotes

1. Allen Potter, "British Party Organization - 1950", Political Science Quarterly, (LXVI: 1), March, 1951, p.85. Here also Professor Potter spells out what he means by the rest of society:

On the whole the organization of the Conservative party is more flexible and informal than that of the Labour party. The Tories have had at their disposal the powerful institutions of British society, 'the normal organization of English upper and middle class life', and consequently have not needed a strong party machine. The Labour movement, which challenged the existing order, had to create a tightly disciplined political army.
2. Richard Rose, Politics In England, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1964), p.19
3. Leon D. Epstein, "The Politics of British Conservatism", American Political Science Review (XLVIII:1), March, 1954, p.40.
4. Lord Windlesham, "The Communication of Conservative Policy 1963-1964", Political Quarterly, Vol. 36, 1965, p. 164.
5. Allen Potter, op. cit., p. 83
6. See also Robert McKenzie, British Political Parties, (London: Heinemann's, 1963) Second Edition, p.285-286, which this section derives from.
7. Richard Rose, "The Political Ideas of English Party Activists", American Political Science Review, (LVI:2), 1962, p.360 paraphrasing "The Final Report of the Committee on Party Organisation" (National Union, London: 1949), p.27
8. David Clarke, "The Organization of Political Parties", Political Quarterly, (XXI:1) Jan-Mar., 1950, p.87.
9. Mark Abrams, "Public Opinion Polls And Political Parties", Public Opinion Quarterly, (XXVII:1) Spring, 1963, p.10.
10. David E. Butler, The British General Election of 1951, (London: Macmillan, 1952), p.144.
11. See Mark Abrams, op.cit., p.11.
12. Robert McKenzie, "The Wilson Report And The Future Of The Labour Party Organization", Political Studies, Vol.IV., 1956, p.94
13. Leon D. Epstein, "British Mass Parties" Political Science Quarterly, (LXXI:1), March, 1956, p.122.
14. Allen M. Potter, "The English Conservative Constituency Association",

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Western Political Quarterly, (IX:2), June, 1956, p. 363-375.

5. See Leon D. Epstein, "British M.P.s And Their Local Parties", American Political Science Review, (LIV:2), June, 1960, and also Nigel Nicolson, People and Parliament, (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1957).
6. Peter Bromhead, "How Should Parliament Be Reformed?", Political Quarterly (XXX:3), July-Sept, 1959, p.275.
7. Quintin Hogg, M.P., quoted by David Hennessy, "The Communication of Conservative Policy 1957-1959", Political Quarterly (XXXII: 3), July-Sept., 1961, p.238-239.
8. D.E. Butler and Anthony King, The British General Election of 1964, (London: Macmillan, 1964), p.59.
9. D.E. Butler and Richard Rose, The British General Election of 1959, (London; Macmillan, 1960), p.140.
10. For a full discussion of this program see David Hennessy, op.cit., p.254.
11. Julian Critchley, M.P., "The Intellectuals", Political Quarterly, Vol.32, 1961, p.268.
12. This section draws heavily from the excellent discussion of this aspect of the problem in Mark Abrams, op.cit., p.11-13.
13. Susan Walker, "Project '67- Speaker's Brief", unpublished background paper circulated from Conservative Central Office, Feb., 1967.
14. Ibid., p.2-3.

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Western Political Quarterly, (IX:2), June, 1956, p. 363-375.

15. See Leon D. Epstein, "British M.P.s And Their Local Parties", American Political Science Review, (LIV:2), June, 1960, and also Nigel Nicolson, People and Parliament, (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1957).
16. Peter Bromhead, "How Should Parliament Be Reformed?", Political Quarterly (XXX:3), July-Sept, 1959, p.275.
17. Quintin Hogg, M.P., quoted by David Hennessy, "The Communication of Conservative Policy 1957-1959", Political Quarterly (XXXII: 3), July-Sept., 1961, p.238-239.
18. D.E. Butler and Anthony King, The British General Election of 1964, (London: Macmillan, 1964), p.59.
19. D.E. Butler and Richard Rose, The British General Election of 1959, (London; Macmillan, 1960), p.140.
20. For a full discussion of this program see David Hennessy, op.cit., p.254.
21. Julian Critchley, M.P., "The Intellectuals", Political Quarterly, Vol.32, 1961, p.268.
22. This section draws heavily from the excellent discussion of this aspect of the problem in Mark Abrams, op.cit., p.11-13.
23. Susan Walker, "Project '67- Speaker's Brief", unpublished background paper circulated from Conservative Central Office, Feb., 1967.
24. Ibid., p.2-3.

Summary and Conclusion

In summarizing the case for the gap in reverse communications one must always be aware of the historical precedents of the problem and some of the ways in which the parliamentary system has over the years attempted to resolve it. The modern model of parliamentary representation has its justification originating in the reaction by Edmund Burke against the view of the Member simply as a delegate of and spokesman for the parochial interests of his constituents. A Parliament of the nation implied the primacy of the national interest and sublimation of the local - or even the popular interest/ That argument was the modern philosophic justification for the gap between people and parliament, a gap which had been more overt when government in Britain was a matter for kings and nobles. The structured communications channels of the early nineteenth century, themselves a reflection of Burkean notions, were made obsolescent as pressures for democracy, or at least a form of it, became more pronounced. The ideas of Bentham and John Stuart Mill gained wide currency at mid-century and there was the beginning of an appreciation for the role of the common man in politics. Although political leaders greeted the widening of the franchise in 1867 with something less than wild enthusiasm, the parties had already begun to themselves to act as agents of political education and communication between the masses and their rulers.

The creation of the mass parties in the third quarter of the nineteenth century was the first real response of the party system to the demand for democracy. But if one examines the ends that were achieved - a highly organized system aimed at electoral aggrandizement - as opposed to the ends

which were announced - informing and communicating with the masses - it is difficult not to conclude that the creation of the extra-parliamentary parties represented a barrier to the free flow of communications. In a sense this barrier, although unwittingly created as an extension of the democratic initiative, replaced the philosophical barrier which had fallen into some disrepute. What resulted was a fusion both of the philosophical barrier of Burke with the physical impediment of the party system. It only remained for Walter Bagehot to clarify the situation with his deference model of society. The gap had become self conscious and self-justified.

Contemporary perception of the communications gap is sometimes openly expressed but more often is at least partially hidden in the call for wider participation in government. All the same, many of the problems of participation can be traced back to the gap in reverse communications and from there to the blocked channels of communication. One of the most significant aspects of the reverse communications gap can be seen in the fact that most contacts that a Member of Parliament has with his constituents are not discussions of policy; instead they are for one kind or another of governmental assistance. Many M.P.s have expressed the feeling that they are becoming little more than special welfare officers. This aspect startles since one would expect to find that the bulk of political communications would take place between the voters and the individual who represents them directly in the parliamentary system.

One might also expect to find that the voters could communicate on a political level with the local party units. This is not the case. The local parties are semi-autonomous units usually controlled by a clique of

some kind, a situation far removed from the idealized concept of 'mass' parties. Activist involvement in the local parties is perhaps an adjunct of modern politics, but the tendency has given effective control of the voluntary organizations to the few who are involved. The democratic imperatives of the voluntary party organizations are seriously undermined by the fact that recent studies have shown that over three-quarters of the parliamentary seats are 'safe', which implies that the local organizations in those seats do not operate under very much popular duress. All of which means that the great bulk of the people have little to say about the conduct of government since their vote counts little in the general election and their participation in party affairs is limited at the local level in many ways and at the national by many more.

The motivation for the electorate to communicate on a policy level with their representatives has also been called into question since there is a scepticism about the worth or the usefulness of those representatives which has become increasingly prevalent in the last few years. Accordingly attempts have been made to use alternative channels of communication, usually in a less structured atmosphere than has generally been the case in British politics. But whatever can be said about the motivation of the electorate, or possibly the lack of it, there is no reason to suppose that there is general contentment with things as they are; there is a great deal of evidence to show that the reputation of Parliament is declining, and at least part of the reason for it is that people no longer feel able to control it. As the Times put it, modern democracies are faced with the need for both greater efficiency and wider participation.

That same problem is in some sense deeply engrained in the norms and values of British life. It is clear that no political device encouraging participation can hope to succeed if a contrary message is conveyed by education and socialization. The gap is in some sense the result of the technocratic era which is common to all industrialized democracies; a gap exists by virtue of the division of labor in such societies and the process of government is not immune or exempted from the problem. One of the suggested methods for improving communications between people and government has been the use of polls, market research techniques, and demographic constituency surveys. In one way or another both major parties have made attempts to exploit these techniques, if for no other reason than tactical advantage.

The Labour party has, since 1960, made use of polls and statistical studies in its election preparations as part of an effort to improve their professional organization. The voluntary part of the party has received little attention insofar as these techniques are concerned, with the result that the entire extra-parliamentary party has become a machine designed for the purpose of winning elections, not for discussing or determining policies. Labour's problem, put very simply, is that their short-run successes with opinion polls encouraged them to ignore their long-range implications. Consequently there is little initiative within the Labour party at present to encourage the expression of individual opinions to improve communications inside the party and outside of it as well.

The Conservatives have been at least vaguely interested in polls since 1958, although initially they did even less with them than Labour did. The

prospect of impending defeat in 1959, 1964 and 1966 led the party deeper and deeper into the field; when defeat became a reality once more in 1966 the party lost no time in searching for new methods of using the market research devices. The thrust of that effort became embodied in Project '67, an attempt to enable the constituency parties to obtain precise data on the make-up of their communities. It was hoped, however much it might have been played down, that this data would be used to re-structure the associations by encouraging the direct participation of members of leading component groups of the community. It is expected that the initial reluctance of some constituency parties to do this may be replaced by hostility once the nature of the reform becomes more apparent. The present hierarchy will in all likelihood be reluctant to give up its privileged position to the new upstarts. Aligned to this philosophical barrier is the physical struc-

It has been a major contention of this paper that the parliamentary system was making a response to the problem of the gap in reverse communications. There is little reason to doubt that such a response is being made, that the problem is being perceived and something is being done about it. The preceding discussion, however, makes clear that the gap is something more than a purely political problem and that it has more basic beginnings in the structure of British society. One wonders, then, about the success of a purely political solution as the Conservative response. One conclusion, then, of this paper must be that the nature of the problem needs to be re-thought by the people whose responsibility it must be to solve it - the political leaders. The problem of communications must be clearly perceived if it is to be dealt with effectively, but along with that specific perception

must be a general consciousness of the roots of the situation and a corresponding willingness to do something about it. To be more specific, it will do little good to socialize a man one way and then expect him to respond in a different manner altogether. Both the socialization and the perceived political role must be made to correspond. It is that focus which at present is lacking in the perception of the political elite.

It is no wonder that the response to date seems inadequate; it is necessarily inadequate for a number of reasons. First there is an ideological problem in that prior ideas of representation as explored in this paper still exercise a strong appeal among the members of the political elite; the idea of a wider kind of democracy conflicts in some respects with these norms and there is a need for a recognition of the necessity for representational reform. Allied to this philosophical barrier is the physical structure of the parliamentary system with the quasi-isolation which it imposes upon the leadership and its oligarchic tendencies, all of which make it somewhat removed from popular access. The problem of the social and cultural traditions of British life has been touched upon above, but it must be emphasized that if the reverse communications gap is to be ameliorated then the parliamentary leaders must recognize the changing nature of that tradition and take steps to modify its more obsolete portions. Lastly there is the problem posed by the present incumbents in the power structure who will rightly perceive that their position is being undermined in the move for reform. In that area both self-interest and ideology will have to be counteracted.

Perhaps for that last reason the response as it is presently constit-

uted must be assigned a gloomy prognosis. It is difficult to see how the Conservatives can logically expect to remove a segment of their entrenched local leadership without formally committing themselves to a more comprehensive effort than they have thus far. While it is doubtful that they could publicly announce that a purge was underway, the effort could be presented in a variety of ways in the name of modernization and participation, particularly since the Tories enjoy a level of tactical sophistication. In any case there must be a greater evidence of commitment to these reforms if they are to be carried off successfully.

If this commitment is not made more explicit and more comprehensive it must ultimately end in frustration and defeat. To succeed the movement for reform must be self-conscious, and possibly self-justified as well. It is all the more important for the commitment to be made because the need for the reforms it will enact is immediate if the parliamentary system is ever to bridge one of its most important problems, the gap in reverse communications.

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