Conservatives, National Politics, and the Challenge to Democracy in Britain, 1931-37

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This dissertation explores Conservative intellectual discourse of the 1930s, and the elite media through which it was disseminated. Elite media, principally the periodical press and scholarly books, continued to flourish in Conservative parliamentary circles at this time. Despite the rise of mass media and Conservative attempts to reach out to a wider public through radio, it was through elite media that Conservatives exchanged political ideas. By exploring this sphere of debate the dissertation increases our knowledge of Conservative attitudes to democracy, the constitution, Labour politics, state intervention, Liberalism, and the party's own electoral base. Conservative intellectual debate mostly demanded loyalty to Baldwin and the parliamentary system of government. As such it provided a major cultural, intellectual, and political bulwark to democracy. Most literary Conservatives looked for new ways to revive established Conservative values and traditions. Some rejected the politics of *laissez-faire*, which had dominated the nineteenth century, blaming Liberals for Britain's current economic and political difficulties. Others embraced the Liberal inheritance, including democracy, because they wanted to absorb Liberals and Liberal traditions into a broad Conservative coalition capable of restricting Labour's electoral appeal. Some were highly selective, choosing to draw on different aspects of pre-Victorian, Victorian, and Edwardian Conservative and Liberal political traditions. Conservative MPs and intellectuals, while sharing many ideas and values, argued vehemently over the balance of individualism and collectivism, whether the state should intervene further in areas of economic and social policy, and whether the party should simply embrace the new democratic age, attempt to mitigate its potential effects, or even turn the clock back. Baldwin's genius was that he was able to select ideas and 'languages' from different Conservative cultures without isolating those MPs and intellectuals whose ideas were either neglected or ignored.

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text. No parts of the dissertation have been submitted for any other qualification.

This dissertation is 79,977 words long. It does not exceed the accepted word limit (80,000) of the Degree Committee of the Faculty of History.

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Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BHL	British Housewives League
BUF	British Union of Fascists
CAUR	*Comitati d'Azione per l'Universalità di Roma*
CCO	Conservative Central Office
CPRB	Combined Production and Resources Board
CRD	Conservative Research Department
DNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
JAG	Judge Advocate General
LBC	Left Book Club
NBA	National Book Association
NPB	National Publicity Bureau
OUP	Oxford University Press
PEP	Political and Economic Planning
RBC	Right Book Club
TRG	Tory Reform Group
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UEP	United Empire Party

Introduction

Exploring Elite Conservative Culture, 1931-37

Most historians of interwar Britain would agree with Nick Smart's contention that 'little scholarly attention has been paid to the peculiar internal dynamics of the National Government, or on how its supporters justified its continuation'.[1] Equally, it is difficult to ignore his claim that Labour's 'massive defeat has received much more coverage than the manner in which the Conservatives adapted themselves to the no less daunting terms of their victory'.[2] Although historians have analysed the 1931 crisis in considerable detail, Smart's history stands alone as a guide to the principal themes and policies of the National Government in the 1930s.[3] However, Smart provides few answers to these important questions. What develops is mainly a narrative account of some of the political crises or challenges faced by the National Government; for example, its 'agreement to differ' over the Import Duties Bill, the Government of India Bill, political extremism in Britain, the 1935 general election, and problems of foreign policy from the Abyssinian crisis to the declaration of war on Germany in 1939. Smart's book was commissioned as a historical survey for undergraduate students, which explains some of its limitations, but its inadequacies surely relate to broader problems with the historiography of 1930s domestic politics. We know little about Conservative politics at the parliamentary level beyond studies of the party leadership and National Government cabinet ministers. Likewise, historians have argued that our

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[1] Nick Smart, *The National Government, 1931-40* (London, 1999), p. 1.
[2] Ibid., p. 38.
[3] The key works on the 1931 crisis are Stuart Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative party. The crisis of 1929-1931* (London, 1988). Andrew Thorpe, *The British general election of 1931* (Oxford, 1991). Philip Williamson, *National crisis and National Government. British politics, the economy and empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge, 1992). The 1935 general election is also well documented; see Tom Stannage, *Baldwin thwarts the opposition. The British general election of 1935* (London, 1980). There are unpublished accounts of National Government politics, which are of significant value; see especially William Frame, 'The Conservative party and domestic reconstruction 1931-35 (unpublished PhD thesis: Royal Holloway; University of London, 1999). Maurice Cowling's *The impact of Hitler. British politics and British policy 1933-1940* (Cambridge, 1975) should not be ignored because it contains much valuable material on the National Government, but he was mainly concerned with tracing foreign policy developments in context of domestic politics and his book only begins in 1933. John Ramsden's *A history of the Conservative party. The age of Balfour and Baldwin 1902-1940* (London, 1978) provides more than an introduction, but it covers a much larger chronological period and it is more concerned with developments in party organisation. Philip Williamson's *Stanley Baldwin. Conservative leadership and national values* (Cambridge, 1999) is indispensible, but naturally he focuses on Baldwin's politics.

knowledge of 1930s popular Conservatism lacks the substance of David Jarvis's work on the 1920s.[4]

Some of these inadequacies are now being addressed. The recent publication of Ross McKibbin's Ford Lectures provides us with a more convincing and readable account of British politics across the period 1914-51. Building on his earlier work, McKibbin argues that the failure of the second Labour government to construct an effective electoral appeal in the wake of its collapse drove many working-class voters back into the Conservative camp. This created the conditions for Conservative electoral 'hegemony', which was finally broken only in 1940, when Conservatives welcomed Labour into the wartime coalition government. In his latest reading of the period, McKibbin argues that the Conservatives 'also made their own luck'.[5] This argument owes much to the work of E.H.H. Green, David Jarvis, Bill Schwarz, Siân Nicholas, and Philip Williamson.[6] Focussing on different aspects of interwar political culture, these historians have revealed much about how the Conservative party and the National Government constructed and maintained its electoral appeal in the 1930s. As a result, McKibbin now argues, 'They [Conservatives] manipulated the 1931 crisis such that Labour's electoral defeat was much heavier even than the by-elections earlier in the year foretold, and they consciously shaped themselves as a party acceptable to a majority of the population in ways which involved important changes in appearance and attitude. Baldwin's significance is that he encouraged and personified this refashioning.'[7]

If Smart identifies some of the most important questions about the nature of the National Government, including why Conservative elites accepted its existence when they could have won a mandate standing alone, he fails adequately to explain the reasons for Conservative self denial. And McKibbin has never shown much interest in 'high politics'. This is because he is primarily interested in the social bases of politics, even if his recent work registers a strong interest in the independent role of ideology. This thesis builds on McKibbin's interest

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[4] David Jarvis, 'The shaping of Conservative electoral hegemony, 1918-39', in Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor (eds), *Party, state and society. Electoral behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot, 1997), p. 134. Jon Lawrence, 'Why Olympia mattered', *Historical Research*, 78 (May 2005), pp. 265-6. For Jarvis's work on the 1920s see David Jarvis, 'Mrs. Maggs and Betty: the Conservative appeal to women voters in the 1920s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 5 (1994), pp. 129-52; 'British Conservatism and class politics in the 1920s', *English Historical Review*, 111 (1996), pp. 59-84; 'Stanley Baldwin and the ideology of the Conservative response to socialism, 1918-1931' (unpublished PhD thesis; University of Lancaster, 1991).

[5] Ross McKibbin, *Parties and people. England 1914-1951* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 104-5.

[6] Their work is discussed in more detail below.

[7] McKibbin, *Parties and people*, p. 105.

in ideology, if not his broader focus on electoral politics. Its focus is elite Conservative culture, though not as understood in classic 'high political' accounts. It disregards Maurice Cowling's famous dictum: 'The political system consisted of fifty or sixty politicians in conscious tension with one another whose accepted authority constituted political leadership.'[8] By the 1930s, these were not the *only* political elites who mattered. Backbench MPs and Conservative intellectuals do not appear 'off-stage as malignant or beneficent forces' in my account of 1930s Conservatism;[9] rather they form the basis of a study of political intermediaries. These intermediaries bolstered the constitutional politics of the National Government and stayed loyal to Baldwin even when dissatisfied ideologically or professionally. More importantly, Conservative intellectuals and backbench MPs were charged with the responsibility of sustaining support for the National Government amongst the party's rank-and-file membership and in the constituencies. They were local leaders who played a major role in 'educating' the public and also each other. They used their literary skills to construct political arguments for different forms of media, comprising books, the periodical press, and radio, which targeted selective reading—and listening—publics. In other words, the focus of this thesis is the complex relationship between the upper- and middle-tiers of the Conservative party; the relationship between MPs and their constituency organisations is the focus of other work.[10]

Looking beyond electoral politics, two recent works demand attention: Martin Pugh's *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!'* and Richard Overy's *The Morbid Age*. Pugh has sought to revise our interpretation of the importance of British fascism by suggesting that a significant number of mainstream Conservatives were involved with the movement in various ways throughout the interwar period.[11] Pugh argues, 'What needs to be emphasised…is that pro-fascist M.P.s were not simply eccentric, obsessive anti-Semites like Captain Maule Ramsay, the founder of the Right Club.'[12] Jon Lawrence's response to Pugh's argument is more

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[8] Maurice Cowling, *The impact of Labour 1920-1924: The Beginning of modern British politics* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 3-4.
[9] Ibid., p. 3.
[10] Thankfully some important work has now been done in this area; see J.W.B. Bates, 'The Conservative party in the constituencies, 1918-1939' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis; University of Oxford, 1994); and, Geraint Thomas, 'Conservatives and the culture of "national" government between the wars' (unpublished PhD thesis; University of Cambridge, in progress).
[11] Martin Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!' Fascists and fascism in Britain between the wars* (London, 2005), pp. 1-6.
[12] Martin Pugh, 'The National Government, the British Union of Fascists and the Olympia debate', *Historical Research*, 78 (May 2005), p. 260.

faithful to the development of the historiography of the interwar Conservative party: 'Pugh's work is valuable for picking at the underbelly of that consensual, centrist Conservatism, but we should not lose sight of who called the shots throughout the nineteen-thirties. Nor should we underestimate Baldwin's achievement in holding the Right together while pursuing an essentially centrist, even liberal, political strategy.'[13] Lawrence's view suggests that what we really need to focus on is not a series of pseudo-fascist comments by a minority of Conservative MPs, but the complex reasons why even those MPs remained within the ranks of the Conservative party despite their frustration at Baldwin's leadership. Pugh is right to argue that Conservatives and fascists could hold common positions, but the same might be said of almost all political parties and movements during the interwar period. Left-wing members of the Conservative party held positions in common with Labour, particularly on social reform and the planning of industry, but this did not result in them joining the Labour party.[14] What defined both interwar Conservatism and British fascism were not their similarities but their differences. How many of Pugh's fascist sympathisers, for example, would have been ready to abolish the whole party political system and the House of Lords in favour of a one-party Commons and a 'corporate' second chamber? What would they have made of Mosley's idea of conceding British colonies for the greater good of international fascism? How many right-wing sympathisers would have supported the development of a planned economy? Questions such as these are not sufficiently considered by Pugh and they can be answered only by much more systematic research into the political ideas and public rhetoric of Conservative politicians.

As this thesis will show, most mainstream Conservatives were involved in actively refuting fascist claims and developing powerful counter arguments premised on the defence of parliamentary traditions. All too often Pugh lists names of Conservative sympathisers but fails adequately to explain why they fall into the pro-fascist category.[15] For instance, his argument that many Conservative MPs 'seem to have been remarkably unembarrassed to belong to a fascist organisation' hinges on whether one accepts the view that the January

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[13] Jon Lawrence, 'Why Olympia mattered', p. 266.
[14] For a discussion of industrial reorganisation and 'planning' see Daniel Ritschel, *The politics of planning. The debate on economic planning in Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1997). For a different view of potential cross-party cooperation see Frame, 'The Conservative Party and domestic reconstruction'.
[15] E.g. Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!'*, pp. 5, 146-52.

Club was a distinctly fascist venture.[16] Pugh does not consider whether contemporary Conservatives would have viewed it as such. It could be argued that those who joined did not know the true motives behind its existence. After all, the BUF used it as a front organisation to attract mainstream Conservative politicians, having failed to do so directly. Pugh classifies all those on the Club's initial membership list as sympathisers, but it remains plausible that some of the more mainstream figures may have dropped out once they recognised its true character. In fact we have no way of knowing how often Conservative members attended the club. It is also a fact that most Conservative MPs were members of a whole array of luncheon and gentlemen's clubs in the 1930s. The opportunity to discuss modern political ideas, including the Italian 'Corporate State', was very attractive to those who wrote about similar themes in the periodical press and in books, but this does not mean that they sought to conspire against the Conservative party or the British constitution. Pugh is clearly influenced by a number of Conservative letters of support for the BUF after its violent clash with communists at Olympia.[17] However, those responses are predictable when one remembers how Conservatives had engaged in anti-socialist propaganda for over a decade and how much they deplored the menace of so-called 'Labour rowdyism'.[18] Not all Conservative sympathisers on Pugh's list should be exonerated, but those who were active in extremist politics were marginal eccentrics, a fact Pugh strenuously denies.

Pugh's aim in his book was 'to carry the subject of British fascism to a wider audience by suggesting that it is part of the national story'.[19] He achieves the first of his aims because no other work on the subject attempts to place British fascism within the context of the most important debates on interwar British history, but he fails properly to interweave the story of British fascism with more conventional accounts of the period. There was substantial Conservative interest in fascist ideas across the entire spectrum of the party, but interest did not result in concrete support. There was certainly some interest at local level, but fascism

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[16] See Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: from Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts to the National Front* (London, 1998 edn.), p. 70. Thurlow argues, and in my view correctly, that the January Club was an opportunity for 'leading fascists to discuss contemporary political issues with experts and some opponents in a convivial after-dinner atmosphere'.

[17] See Martin Pugh, 'The British Union of Fascists and the Olympia debate', *The Historical Journal*, 41 (June 1998), pp. 532-4; and, 'The National Government', pp. 253-62.

[18] On Conservative party anti-Socialist propaganda in the 1920s see Jarvis, 'Stanley Baldwin and the Ideology of the Conservative Response to Socialism'. On 'Labour rowdyism' see Jon Lawrence, 'The transformation of British public politics after the First World War', *Past and Present*, 190 (February 2006), pp. 196-203.

[19] Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!'*, p. 2.

had few adherents in Parliament.[20] One exception, according to L.S. Amery, was Michael Beaumont, who came close to resigning as a Conservative MP in order to join the BUF. However, he could not bring himself to work for Mosley. Amery claimed both he and Edward Winterton 'did a good deal to wean Beaumont from his somewhat disgruntled leaning towards Fascism'.[21] This was yet another example of senior Conservatives working side-by-side to hold the party together, which gives a significant insight into elite Conservative culture, the subject of this thesis.

By contrast G.C. Webber and Richard Griffiths display a greater awareness of fascism's marginal purchase within mainstream, elite, Conservative culture. Unlike Pugh, Webber emphasises diversity amongst right-wing groups and members of the Conservative party. He argues, 'It often appeared as if those on the Right disagreed more with one another than they did with their opponents.'[22] While this is undoubtedly true, Webber does not try to explain the complexities of Conservative party politics, nor does he take much interest in the party beyond members of the India Defence League. Essentially, Webber looks outside the Conservative party for answers, whereas this thesis looks within. Griffiths, in his introduction to *Fellow-Travellers of the Right*, is also careful to draw our attention to the limited political impact of his subjects: 'The people with whom this book deals were, in most circumstances, a sizeable minority of public opinion rather than anything more.'[23] Although his book is often cited as evidence of Conservative party sympathy for fascism, it deals mainly with foreign policy and attitudes towards Nazi Germany. He clearly demonstrates the large amount of pro-fascist literature produced in Britain during the 1930s. Most of this work was authored by academics, journalists, publicists, and military figures who were interested in Italian Fascism and the idea of a corporate state.[24] But the nature of Griffiths' study demands the removal of these sources from their original context. His pro-fascist voices formed as much a part of an active argument within British radical right politics as a response to international trends. This thesis shifts the focus away from Griffiths' fringe voices to their adversaries among mainstream Conservative MPs and intellectuals. Only by

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[20] On potential support for fascism in the constituencies see Gary Love, 'The British Movement, Duncan Sandys, and the politics of constitutionalism in the 1930s', *Contemporary British History*, 23 (December 2009), pp. 543-58.
[21] See Amery diary, 27 July 1934, Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre, AMEL 7/28.
[22] G.C. Webber, *The ideology of the British right 1918-1939* (Beckenham, 1986), p. 133.
[23] Richard Griffiths, *Fellow travellers of the right: British enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933-39* (Oxford, 1983), p. 2.
[24] Ibid., pp. 15-24.

setting this material alongside the work of Griffiths can we appreciate the context in which the unconstitutional and proto-fascist arguments of some on the radical right appeared, and, just as importantly, the substantial weight of opinion that was mobilised against them.[25]

By contrast, in *The Morbid Age* Richard Overy focuses on the pessimistic voices of a small band of left-wing intellectuals and political figures, but in doing so fails to measure the influence of those writers on the public at large.[26] As Eric Hobsbawm cautions: 'Unless clearly backed by an important publishing house or journal, as with Victor Gollanz or Kingsley Martin's *New Statesman*, or an actual mass organisation like Lord Robert Cecil's League of Nations Union or Canon Sheppard's pacifist Peace Pledge Union, they had the word, but little else.'[27] Hobsbawm's strictures apply equally to voices of the right, which is why this thesis focuses specifically on the interaction between Conservative writers and other political and educated elites. Certainly, the market for political books and periodicals was limited to these influential circles. As Hobsbawm reiterates, intellectual voices on radio represented only a 'tiny fraction…of its vast output'. The huge discrepancy between the circulation figures of *The Listener* (52,000) and the *Radio Times* (2.4 million) during 1935 confirms the BBC's duality as both an elite and popular medium.[28] Unlike Overy's account of interwar British political culture, this thesis does not attempt to claim undue influence for Conservative intellectuals, politicians, and writers—it does not suggest that their arguments reflected the 'mood music' of interwar British culture as a whole. Rather, it seeks to reconstruct a diverse Conservative political and literary culture at elite level.

It was always my conscious decision to focus on that 'corral of…intellectuals, activists and national decision-makers' who did much to cement relationships between the party leadership (Baldwin and CCO) and the party's rank-and-file members.[29] It is perhaps easier

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[25] Another important work on this subject is Alan Sykes, *The radical right in Britain. Social imperialism to the BNP* (Basingstoke, 2005). Sykes collapses all far right groups and genuine fascist movements into his category the 'Radical Right'. His work, like Webber's, surveys the most important far right groups of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but he draws our attention to watershed moments in the development of 'Radical Right' ideas; the importance of factors such as social imperialism and property are used to distinguish Edwardian groups from interwar fascists, and their more populist successors like the National Front. Although imperialism, social reform, and property are issues explored by many of the Conservative writers included in this thesis, most cannot be categorised as belonging to the 'Radical Right' for reasons that are explained below. Only Dorothy Crisp and her small band of right-wing Tories came close to matching Sykes' criteria.

[26] Richard Overy, *The morbid age. Britain between the wars* (London, 2009).

[27] Eric Hobsbawm, 'C (for crisis)', *London Review of Books*, 31 (6 August 2009), pp. 12-13.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

to measure the influence of public opinion on politicians and intellectuals than it is the other way round, but we must acknowledge that political elites are highly selective when it comes to interpreting public opinion. Political prejudices, traditions, and loyalties fashion their responses, but we can argue with some confidence that Conservatives *were* responding to the public in an age of mass democracy. As will be shown, a host of examples ranging from 'progressive' Conservatives like Walter Elliot and Hugh Molson to those, like Viscount Astor and Arnold Wilson, who warned against needless radicalism, substantiate this view. Some claimed that their views were influenced by students at the party's Ashridge College. F.J.C. Hearnshaw and Hugh Sellon were also influenced by, and in turn sought to influence, religious opinion. Evidently, this was always a two-way process. The arguments of Conservative writers and broadcasters were used to educate young Conservatives at Ashridge and at meetings of the Junior Imperial League, as well as at party conferences; and their literary efforts were sometimes recycled as part of their public speeches, which were still reported in the local press in this period.[30] But radio was the one genuine opportunity for Conservative writers to reach a mass public in the 1930s.

Historians have paid close attention to the language of inter-war Conservatism in recent years. Philip Williamson, Siân Nicholas, and Bill Schwarz have all stressed the importance of ideology, propaganda, media presentation, and political rhetoric to the party's performance. Their work has laid much greater emphasis on Baldwin's creative role as leader of the party in helping to shape a new form of politics after the franchise extensions of 1918 and 1928. John Ramsden, David Cannadine, and Stuart Ball all argued that Baldwin was 'passive, neutral, or hollow'; in other words he was not a genuine leader.[31] But it was probably McKibbin's negative interpretation of Conservative anti-working class stereotypes that encouraged Williamson to focus on Baldwin's public rhetoric, including his radio broadcasts and speeches.[32] Baldwin's message, he argues, was not limited to McKibbin's

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[30] Philip Williamson and Edward Baldwin (eds), *Baldwin papers. A Conservative statesman 1908-1947* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 354. In November 1935 Baldwin acknowledged that the local press was the most appropriate place to 'get our ideas ventilated' because 'The London Press is bad; Daily Mail, Express, News Chronicle, Herald, hard to say which is worse.'

[31] Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 9. See also, *Stuart Ball, Baldwin and the Conservative party*, p. 8; and, David Cannadine, 'Politics, propaganda and art. The case of two Worcestershire lads', *Midland History*, 4 (1977), p. 107.

[32] Philip Williamson, 'The doctrinal politics of Stanley Baldwin', in Michael Bentley (ed.), *Public and private doctrine. Essays in British history presented to Maurice Cowling* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 183-9.

'conventional wisdoms'; his most common themes were the constitution, democracy, freedom, rural life, character, service, and Christianity.[33] Williamson argues that a wholly negative appeal would have failed to attract sufficient 'middle opinion': 'Liberals or quasi-liberals, and moderate, young, and female voters wanted something more than just blank resistance to Labour'.[34] Instead, Baldwin supplied the Conservative party with a 'message which transcended differences of class, material concern, and even party policies, and which tapped and stimulated the forces of a morally conservative and religious nation.'[35]

Siân Nicholas's work on Baldwin and the mass media supports Williamson's arguments. She argues Baldwin's 'Englishness' and conciliatory persona was ideally suited to radio broadcasting and cinema newsreels, if not to traditional forms of political communication, such as speech-making in the House of Commons or soapbox politics. The new media favoured the thoughtful statesman, not the demagogue, and Baldwin was a natural.[36] Nicholas says 'interwar "Englishness" took much of its strength from its inclusiveness and cross-political nature', but adds, significantly, that 'Baldwin was able to embody this construction in a way that effectively marginalized his political opponents.'[37] Nicholas argues that the 'Baldwinite Conservatism' of the National Government 'was the ideal political reflection of the new media' in the 1930s.[38] Baldwin's constructed image resonated particularly with the public service values of the BBC under John Reith. However, despite Nicholas's admirable account of Baldwin's image and his use of mass media, Williamson insists that 'Baldwin's power did not derive just from his form of utterance; it came much more from what he said'.[39] It is here that both Nicholas and Williamson appear to register the influence of Bill Schwarz's earlier Gramscian study of Baldwinite Conservative language.

Schwarz was the first to argue that Baldwin reasserted the moral authority of the Church, state, and family in British political culture through his public rhetoric.[40] In particular, he registered the power of Baldwin's cross-class appeal and his emphasis on national values.

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[33] Williamson, 'The doctrinal politics of Stanley Baldwin', p. 190.
[34] Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 352.
[35] Williamson, 'The doctrinal politics of Stanley Baldwin', p. 208.
[36] Siân Nicholas, 'The construction of a national identity: Stanley Baldwin, 'Englishness' and the mass media in inter-war Britain,' in Martin Francis and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (eds), *The Conservatives and British society*, 1880-1990 (Cardiff, 1996), p. 138.
[37] Ibid., p. 129.
[38] Ibid., p. 140.
[39] Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 338.
[40] Bill Schwarz, 'The language of constitutionalism: Baldwinite Conservatism', in *Formations of Nation and People* (London, 1984), p. 8.

Furthermore, Baldwin's message was conducive to the state-managed approach of the National Government in the 1930s, which marketed itself as the defender of the constitution against revolutionary politics of both left and right. The result of this revisionist work on Baldwin is that most historians now take his moral constitutional message seriously.[41] This is a valuable corrective to older interpretations, which acknowledged the importance of his image, but at the expense of both his ideas and leadership qualities.

In different ways these scholars each register the impression of the 'linguistic turn' or what historians now refer to as the 'new' political history. The arguments employed by 'new' political historians—whether informed by historians of ideas such as Peter Clarke or Quentin Skinner, or by social historians attempting to resolve some of the methodological problems invoked by Marxist history—have generated renewed interest in politicians and their ideas.[42] In the recent collection of essays dedicated to Peter Clarke, E.H.H. Green and Duncan Tanner argue, 'Ideas are seen as tools; their use (like the use of the past more generally) is a powerful weapon either directly within the political context—or within a cultural world which may influence political options and reasoning.'[43] But, at the same time, Green and Tanner carefully explain the differences between traditional high-political history and this approach, stating that 'the value of ideas is reasserted, not as "expert" opinion influencing events, but as mechanisms through which pre-existing orientations are given credibility and meaning'.[44] As Susan Pedersen points out, scholars such as Williamson and McKibbin also share 'common notes' with 'new' political historians. Williamson, who is often regarded as a 'high political' historian, has tried to measure the impact of Baldwin's ideas and rhetoric on the electorate; in so doing he has modified Maurice Cowling's methodology.[45] While Williamson stresses Baldwin's persuasiveness as a 'public moralist', McKibbin focuses on the Conservative party's carefully crafted promotion of deflationary policies. Jarvis on the other hand analyses the party's use of propaganda. As Pedersen

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[41] McKibbin, *Parties and people*, pp. 91-6, 105.
[42] A key work in the development of 'new' political history was Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor (eds), *Party, state and society. Electoral behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot, 1997), particularly their co-authored introduction, pp. 1-26.
[43] E.H.H. Green and D.M. Tanner (eds), *The strange survival of Liberal England: political leaders, moral values and the reception of economic debate* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 26. For a much more extensive discussion of the issues involved here see Green and Tanner's introduction, pp. 1-36.
[44] Green and Tanner (eds), *The strange survival of Liberal England*, p. 27.
[45] Quoted in Susan Pedersen, 'What is political history now?', in David Cannadine (ed.), *What is history now?* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 41. See also Cowling, *The impact of Labour*, p. 3.

recognises, important differences remain, but all three are essentially concerned with re-discovering the party's appeal to the electorate, its methods, the importance of ideas, political rhetoric, and the media; in other words they all acknowledge the central roles of both party and state in the development of interwar British politics.[46]

Jon Lawrence deftly summaries the overall effect of these recent histories: 'Baldwin dominates the historiography as the apostle of a sort of proto-consensus politics—communicating directly to the populace by means of radio and newsreels, as well as the old-fashioned platform.'[47] Experts on Baldwin argue that it was he who was chiefly responsible for engineering a 'national' Conservative message that was suited to coalition politics in the 1930s.[48] As a result, others now argue that the Conservative party was able to attract a new technical, commercial, and scientific middle class, who would have otherwise been expected to vote Liberal.[49] But this work does not amount to an adequate explanation of Conservative politics in the 1930s. We know remarkably little about Conservative public rhetoric in the 1930s beyond the moralising language of Baldwin—the principal exceptions being Jon Parry's important discussion of John Buchan and Julia Stapleton's work on Arthur Bryant.[50] Beyond this work, assumptions are generally made about the Conservative party's success in the 1930s based on research on the 1920s. This thesis adopts a new approach to increase our understanding of Conservative politics at elite level in the 1930s.

It suggests that we cannot fully understand Baldwin's idiosyncrasies or his importance as leader of the Conservative party until we interrogate his relationship with other Conservative elites. This relationship was at least as important as his trump card of 'speaking to the people' better than they could. By engaging with a much larger pool of Conservatives—and by studying their ideas and collective public rhetoric—this thesis reconstructs the intellectual archaeology of a broad Conservative 'world' of discourse. Recognising the importance of this 'world' is important because it helped define the parameters of contemporary debate,

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[46] Pedersen, 'What is political history now?', pp. 44-45.
[47] Lawrence, 'Why Olympia mattered', pp. 265-6.
[48] Williamson, 'The doctrinal politics of Stanley Baldwin', p. 208.
[49] See Ross McKibbin, *Classes and cultures. England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 44-105; and, 'Classes and cultures: a postscript', *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für Soziale Bewegungen*, 27 (2002), pp. 153-66.
[50] See Jon Parry, 'From the thirty-nine articles to the thirty-nine steps: reflections on the thought of John Buchan', in Michael Bentley (ed.), *Public and private doctrine. Essays in British history presented to Maurice Cowling* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 209-35; and Julia Stapleton, *Sir Arthur Bryant and national history in twentieth-century Britain* (Lanham, 2005).

which in turn created favourable conditions for Baldwin's liberal Conservatism. Anna Gambles adopted a similar approach in her study of nineteenth-century Tory protectionism.[51] Using a wide-range of public sources, Gambles demonstrated that protectionism was seen as a viable alternative to Free Trade economics by Conservatives because they believed that it offered the best chance of preserving Britain's constitution and empire. Conservatives, therefore, did not support protectionism on economic grounds alone. However, as one critic has argued, while Gambles' work 'undoubtedly helps us to understand better both the depth of the ideological cleavage wrought by Repeal in 1846, and the intellectual antecedents of late nineteenth-century radical conservatism, its tight focus on the reconstruction of public discourse ultimately weakens its explanatory power'.[52] In other words, Gambles' work, despite its considerable merits, appears to some historians to be 'a history of ideas with the history left out'.[53] Gambles was so focussed on recreating a Conservative 'world' of discourse in which protectionism flourished that she failed adequately to explain why it was ultimately unsuccessful. This thesis goes beyond a recovery of Conservative public discourse to explore why Baldwin's politics prevailed in the 1930s.

Williamson admits that Baldwin could not have made his impact alone, but the genre of biography prevented him from analysing a broader selection of Conservative rhetoric.[54] As Williamson acknowledges, 'The precise extent to which he [Baldwin] expressed a distinctive political message is hard to assess, because no other leading interwar politician has been examined in this manner. A historical literature which would allow adequate comparison does not yet exist.'[55] It is no surprise, then, that Baldwin has become the primary and often sole focus of historians' attentions in recent years. True, Williamson has identified a tight-knit group of 'Christian Conservatives' holding views similar to Baldwin, but he argues that

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[51] Anna Gambles, *Protection and politics. Conservative economic discourse, 1815-1852* (Woodbridge, 1999).
[52] Jon Lawrence, 'Political history', in Stefan Berger, Heiko Feldner, Kevin Passmore (eds), *Writing history. Theory and practice* (London, 2003), p. 188.
[53] Paul Addison used the phrase in a strikingly similar critique of Maurice Cowling's *Religion and public doctrine*. See Paul Addison, 'Destiny, history and providence: the religion of Winston Churchill', in Michael Bentley (ed.), *Public and private doctrine. Essays in British history presented to Maurice Cowling* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 237.
[54] In his article on Christian Conservatives Williamson reveals the potential influence of a small number of high-ranking party members on the party. See Philip Williamson, 'Christian Conservatives and the totalitarian challenge, 1933-40', *English Historical Review*, 115 (June 2000), pp. 607-42.
[55] Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 17.

their rhetorical statements were often limited to sporadic moments of private faith.[56] Williamson continues to uphold the idea that Baldwin had to educate his party on the importance of these ideals, which again reinforces Baldwin's reputation and importance. But as one Conservative MP informed his audience in 1932, a leader's 'personality, reputation, and policy are not enough. He must have out his scouts, evangelists, and pressmen in every corner of the land' and the 'costly crusade of publicity and glorification must be relentless and yet so skilfully conducted as to appear but the natural surge of impulsive human nature'.[57]

It is argued here that many Conservatives helped sustain 'languages of constitutionalism' and that without such a widespread Conservative engagement with public discourse Baldwin would not have been able to tap into these themes as successfully as he did.[58] The assumption that Baldwin acted alone or that he inspired other Conservatives to produce public discourse will be discussed later in the thesis, but the central argument is that his real success lay in his ability to tap into Conservative political cultures and languages that were already deeply embedded in the views of a majority of literary Conservatives by the 1930s. This thesis extends Williamson's approach not by studying other Conservative leaders in comparable detail to his work on Baldwin, but by investigating the ideas of a broad range of Conservative MPs and intellectuals.

The most promising work in terms of Conservative political ideas and the relationship between politicians and the 'public' is that of E.H.H. Green, Clarisse Berthezène, and Julia Stapleton. All three have in various ways mapped out the influential role of Arthur Bryant, Ashridge College, and the right-wing book clubs that were meant to rival Victor Gollancz's Left Book Club (LBC) in the late 1930s. Green was the first to reveal how Ashridge was founded in order to provide education in citizenship and training for individuals on Conservative principles. Bryant, who was first appointed as Secretary of the Education Department at Ashridge in 1928, designed and implemented its curriculum.[59] Berthezène

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[56] Williamson, 'Christian Conservatives', pp. 614-5.
[57] Godfrey Locker-Lampson, *The country gentlemen and other essays* (London, 1932), pp. 14-15.
[58] The term 'language of constitutionalism' originates with Schwarz, 'The language of constitutionalism'.
[59] E.H.H. Green, 'The battle of the books: book clubs and Conservatism in the 1930s', in E.H.H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative political ideas in the twentieth century* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 135-8. On economic ideas discussed by Conservatives at Ashridge and within the Conservative Research Department see E.H.H. Green, 'The Conservative party and Keynes', in

looked more closely at Ashridge, measuring the intensity of Conservative political education throughout the 1930s.[60] She concluded from her analysis that 'Ashridge was the first major attempt by the Conservative Party fully to accommodate "intellectuals" by creating a "Fabian Society of the Right"'.[61] In turn, Green's work on both the Right Book Club (RBC) and Bryant's National Book Association (NBA) explored their efforts to reach and politically educate a larger audience beyond the Conservative party membership. Both failed to live up to expectations, leading Green to conclude that 'the Right lost the 1930s "battle of the books"'.[62]

Much less attention has been paid to less organised Conservative intellectual endeavours, especially those conducted through the commercial media. This thesis contrasts periodical literature and published books with broadcasts in order to determine what messages Conservatives deemed suitable for the general public, and what they reserved for elite media. Chapter One discusses the readerships of periodicals and books, and the different political outlooks and traditions of individual reviews. The periodical press had both an upper- and middle-class readership in the 1930s; evidently, politicians and intellectuals made-up a significant part of that readership. Periodicals remained an important medium for literary Conservatives who wanted to explain their ideas in detail to their peers and hopefully influence the government. Books were also written by Conservatives for highly selective reading publics. Conservative broadcasts were aimed at a more general audience, but they also secured an elite audience because broadcast scripts were reprinted in the BBC's magazine *The Listener*.

Baldwin's awareness of the need for the Conservative party to at least present itself as a party of ideas gave literary Conservatives considerable free rein to explore their interests,

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E.H.H. Green and D.M. Tanner (eds), *The strange survival of Liberal England: political leaders, moral values and the reception of economic debate* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 188-9.

[60] Clarisse Berthezène, 'Ashridge College, 1929-54: a glimpse at the archive of a Conservative intellectual project', *Contemporary British History*, 19 (Spring 2005), pp. 86-7. For example, Berthezène revealed that in its first ten years (1929-1939) 529 guest lecturers spoke at the college (29 were members of the House of Lords and 132 were Members of the House of Commons) and the majority were Conservatives. She also described the content of lecture courses, which included 38 lectures on citizenship, 57 on parliamentary procedure, and 71 on Conservative principles.

[61] Clarisse Berthezène, 'Creating Conservative Fabians: the Conservative party, political education and the founding of Ashridge College', *Past & Present*, 182 (2004), p. 238.

[62] Green, 'The battle of the books', pp. 153-4. Green states that in 1937 the RBC had around 10,000 members compared with the NBA's 5,000 in 1939, while the LBC was far more successful achieving 50,000 members by 1936.

which increased the party's chances of holding on to its middle- and upper-class vote.[63] The party was not merely apolitical in the 1930s and it did not always rely on Baldwin's 'Englishness'. Although this was strategically important in electoral terms because Baldwin was leader of the party, many Conservatives constructed their own historical narratives of English history to suit their political needs. They disagreed about what constituted 'Englishness'/'Britishness', but this was a strength given the different publics Conservative had to address in the 1930s.[64] Different Conservative 'languages' were needed to sustain the party's integrity under coalition government. Therefore, the most important questions are, first, to what extent did these divergent voices seek to challenge or confront Baldwin's politics and, second, how far were others willing to help nuance his message to reflect the perceived concerns of the Conservative party's and the National Government's political elites?

Arguably, it was because Conservative MPs, intellectuals, and party workers never felt excluded from Conservative public debate that they did not seek to mount a genuine challenge to Baldwin's leadership or his form of liberal Conservatism. The only exception was radio, where both the diehards and Winston Churchill were at times prevented from airing their views by CCO. Otherwise, Conservatives did not simply fall into some sort of Baldwinite honey-trap. They freely engaged in public debate, carefully formulating their ideas under a range of intellectual and religious influences; they were influenced equally by unemployment, financial hardship, Christianity, revolutionary ideologies, and by problems of empire. Importantly, they wrote about what interested them politically and socially, often challenging Baldwin by calling for stronger leadership or bolder policy commitments. Baldwin's importance, again, lay in his ability to sustain a culture in which Conservative critics believed that their interventions would be taken seriously. All they had to do, so they

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[63] See Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, pp. 151-3. Williamson draws our attention to Baldwin's awareness of the need for Conservatives to present themselves as 'idealists'. The argument that Baldwin's leadership provided other Conservative MPs and intellectuals with enough room to discuss new ideas in elite publications is my own, although my interpretation is based on Williamson's reading of the Conservative party leader.

[64] In some cases Conservatives had to construct alternatives to Baldwin's 'Englishness' to suit the cultural needs of different nations within the United Kingdom itself. Good examples are *A Scotsman's heritage* (London, 1932), a book authored by a group of Scottish Conservatives (including the Duke of Atholl, Walter Elliot, and Lord Macmillan); and, *Character and tradition* (London, 1934) by the Marchioness of Londonderry. As the wife of an Irish landowner, Londonderry described the importance of the Celtic influence on the nation's past.

thought, was to remain patient and loyal, and, in time, their ideas might be adopted by the party leadership.

But what evidence do we have to support this theory? As we know, Baldwin gave the impression to other Conservatives that he remained highly interested in literary work while leader of the party.[65] Correspondence between Samuel Hoare and Baldwin illustrates how his peers expected him to be just as interested in their reading habits as he was in his own. Hoare wrote to Baldwin: 'I have read or re-read many classics, including four or five Waverley novels, several volumes of Johnson's English poets, Voltaire's Charles XII and other old friends of the same kind. I am now reading for the first time Cambell's Lives of the Chancellors.'[66] We can deduce from Baldwin's private correspondence that he sometimes showed interest in politicians' literary efforts at party meetings and at Westminster; at times he even went as far as to request copies of politicians' books and articles.[67] Indeed, some Conservatives literary efforts were directly inspired by Baldwin. The Conservative MP Arnold Wilson felt it necessary to demonstrate that he was helping to educate the public in Christian values by sending Baldwin cuttings of his anonymous letters to *The Times*.[68] He also chose to inform Baldwin about his new position as editor of the *Nineteenth Century and After* because he wanted him to know that the journal was now in safe hands. He took it for granted that Baldwin was interested in literary periodicals.[69] Hoare, in another letter to Baldwin, offers a different insight into how Conservatives viewed their literary work. He described his motivation behind a BBC radio broadcast in January 1935: 'I am very glad that you approved of my B.B.C. talk…I devoted some of my time at Christmas to making up a

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[65] Williamson and Baldwin (eds), *Baldwin papers*, pp. 320, 325, 336-7, 341, 348.

[66] Samuel Hoare to Stanley Baldwin, 8 May 1935, Cambridge University Library, Stanley Baldwin papers, 170/253.

[67] Lord Macmillan to Stanley Baldwin, 21 March 1932, Cambridge University Library, Stanley Baldwin papers, 240/2/27. Lord Macmillan wrote to Baldwin, enclosing a copy of *A Scotsman's Heritage*, in March 1932: 'You were good enough to say at the Palace the other night that you would like to see what a "Scotsman's Heritage" amounted to. Here is a copy of the inventory with the warmest regard of one of the contributors.' See also Austin Hopkinson to Stanley Baldwin, 19 December 1937, Cambridge University Library, Stanley Baldwin papers, 234/6. Austin Hopkinson, an independent MP, who was often supportive of the Conservative leader, described an almost identical scene in a letter to Baldwin in 1937: 'Months ago you asked me to send you what I now enclose. Probably you have forgotten; but what writer ever forgets when anyone has shown any interest in his writings.'

[68] Arnold Wilson to Stanley Baldwin, 29 October 1935, Cambridge University Library, Stanley Baldwin papers, 170/273.

[69] Arnold Wilson to Stanley Baldwin, c.1935, Cambridge University Library, Stanley Baldwin papers, 170/272.

suitable speech…I hope, therefore, that the talks have started well and that you when you come to reply will have a wicket on which you can play as freely as you wish.'[70] This example illustrates the seriousness with which literary Conservatives often viewed their engagement with public discourse. More importantly, it demonstrates that Baldwin listened-in to or was at least informed by his advisers of the content of political broadcasts.

Baldwin was equally keen to recruit Conservative intellectuals to do his bidding against the literary left.[71] On 15 November 1935 Baldwin told Thomas Jones, 'Labour is being drugged by its intellectuals—Laski, Cole & Co.—so far as their policy goes. I want to get together a group of our own men to answer these…I am thinking of [Kenneth] Pickthorn of Cambridge and men of that ability.'[72] Chapters Two, Three, and Four discuss the Conservative intellectuals J.A.R. Marriott, F.J.C. Hearnshaw, and Hugh Sellon. They will argue that these Conservative intellectuals worked to strengthen different Conservatisms, but that, crucially, they were all concerned with defending the constitution against challenges to democracy. And as will be seen, not all could be said to have merely been writing at Baldwin's bidding.

There is some evidence that Baldwin saw literary Conservatism as a safety valve for the party under coalition conditions. Explaining his desire to hold no portfolio he is said to have told the King that 'there would be plenty for him to do, as the Prime Minister knew nothing of his new Party, especially the Conservatives, many of them young, impetuous and ambitious men, with no chance of making reputations with no Opposition to speak against'.[73] Another account confirms Baldwin's anxiety about holding on to young Conservatives under the National Government: 'Mr Baldwin spoke to Mr [Geoffrey] Lloyd about the young Conservatives and how necessary it was to prevent their going off at a tangent and forming cliques and societies.'[74] With virtually no jobs to offer, Baldwin had to find new ways to help placate the party's enthusiastic parliamentary recruits. This thesis considers how far the literary world helped to fill this vacuum of political power and influence. Chapter Five

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[70] Samuel Hoare to Stanley Baldwin, 4 January 1935, Cambridge University Library, Stanley Baldwin papers, 170/252.
[71] Williamson and Baldwin (eds), *Baldwin papers*, p. 444.
[72] Ibid., p. 354. Kenneth Pickthorn, a history fellow at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, was elected as Conservative MP for Cambridge University just one day before on 14 November 1935. He was Conservative MP for Carlton in the division of Nottinghamshire from 1950 until his retirement in 1966.
[73] Ibid., p. 276.
[74] Ibid., p. 278.

discusses young Conservatives at the universities and the right wing journalist Dorothy Crisp; Chapter Six discusses the activities of young 'progressive' Conservative MPs; and, Chapter Seven discusses the response of 'traditional' Conservative MPs who cautioned against undue radicalism.

This thesis documents a broad range of Conservative public discourse, but it focuses solely on the 1931-37 period. It makes sense to begin in 1931 because it was only after the formation of the National Government that Conservative politicians and intellectuals renewed their interest in elite literary culture and intellectual debate on a grander scale. Similarly, this thesis is concerned with measuring Conservative responses to fascist ideas, and these intensified dramatically after the economic crisis of 1929-31. Conservatives were keen to engage in lengthy debates about the Italian 'Corporate State' during 1931-37, but, as one historian has written, 'by the end of 1938 a realisation was growing that Mussolini was something of an irrelevance'.[75] The fact that less research has been done on Conservative domestic politics in the 1930s compared to the 1920s surely justifies a more detailed account of Conservative involvement in the National Government. The decision to focus this study on the years of Baldwin's leadership rather than Chamberlain's is based on the need to contextualise new historical interpretations of Baldwin's reputation. After 1937 the context of these debates changed radically. On one hand, questions of foreign policy inevitably began to loom much larger in elite Conservative debate, on the other many domestic issues were recast by Chamberlain assuming the premiership given his historic links to a 'forward', 'progressive' Conservatism. Many of the debates studied in this thesis were premised on Baldwin's apparent neutrality between different wings of the party—his 'broad church' Conservatism—this ceased to hold after Chamberlain became Prime Minister. This later period has also been better served in the historiography than the formative years of the National Government,[76] where studies of Baldwin's statecraft often still stand in lieu of broader treatments of 'National' politics among Conservatives.[77]

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[75] N.J. Crowson, *Facing fascism. The Conservative party and the European dictators 1935-1940* (London, 1997), pp. 47-8.

[76] See John Ramsden, '"A party for owners or a party for earners?" How far did the British Conservative party really change after 1945?', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 37 (1987), pp. 49-63; and, *The age of Balfour and Baldwin*; Crowson, *Facing fascism*; Griffiths, *Fellow travellers*.

[77] Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*; 'The doctrinal politics of Stanley Baldwin', pp. 181-208; and, 'Christian Conservatives', pp. 607-42.

This thesis also explores the diversity of Conservative intellectual debate in the 1930s. As Baldwin explained to R.A. Butler in July 1935, '[J.L.] Garvin suggested that I should take Ll[oyd] G[eorge] and Churchill into a great National Government. But I told him…that to rule the country a homogeneous team with as much uniformity of ideas as possible was essential.'[78] Clearly there were limits to Baldwin's willingness to tolerate Conservative political debate within the corridors of power, but did this apply outside government? This thesis seeks to map the parameters of 'acceptable' Conservative public discourse. In order to do this effectively, important decisions had to be made as to which Conservative intellectuals and MPs to include. Three groups were chosen. The most prolific writers and broadcasters; those writers who addressed different reading publics; those broadcasters and writers who had not already received significant attention elsewhere. On this basis, it was not difficult to produce a manageable range of literary Conservatives, excluding Baldwin, L.S. Amery, Cuthbert Headlam, and Harold Macmillan, although all occasionally appear 'off stage'.[79] Since it was also decided that it would be impossible here to do justice to the wealth of published material on imperial affairs, Amery and Edward Grigg rarely feature, even though they were two of the most prominent Conservative writers of the time.[80] Instead, the thesis focuses on domestic politics, the constitution, economic affairs, unemployment, and challenges to democracy. In the process, it discusses many Conservative MPs usually overlooked in accounts of 1930s Conservatism, notably Walter Elliott, Quintin Hogg, Lord Eustace Percy, W.S. Morrison, Hugh Molson, Viscount Astor, the Duchess of Atholl, Arnold Wilson, and (the National MP, but future Conservative) Ian Horobin.

With regards to the Conservative intellectuals, there is already a rich literature on the historian Arthur Bryant, and on the writer and Conservative statesman John Buchan, which means that they too appear mainly in passing.[81] J.A.R. Marriott and Hugh Sellon have been wholly neglected by historians of interwar Conservatism, whereas F.J.C. Hearnshaw and Keith Feiling have at least featured in Reba Soffer's recent study of Conservative political thought. Feiling wrote little for the periodical press in this period and did not broadcast, so is absent from the following study. But Hearnshaw was a regular contributor to monthly and

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[78] Williamson and Baldwin (eds), *Baldwin papers*, p. 342. J.L. Garvin was then editor of *The Observer*.
[79] Baldwin is discussed in chapters 1-7; Amery in 1-2, 4, 6-7; Headlam in 1-2, 6-7; Macmillan in 1, 6-7.
[80] Grigg's work is mentioned in passing in Chapter One.
[81] See Parry, 'From the thirty-nine articles', pp. 209-35; and, Julia Stapleton, *Sir Arthur Bryant*.

quarterly reviews, a role that is not explored by Soffer.[82] This has led me to re-evaluate Hearnshaw's importance as a political commentator, comparing his rigid economic liberalism with the more Baldwinite arguments of Sellon and Marriott. The journalist Dorothy Crisp is discussed in Chapter Five because she is representative of radical right Conservatives who remained wedded to Victorian and Edwardian political traditions. Crisp was also an economic liberal—so much so that she idolised Gladstone—and she positioned herself as a representative of Conservative youth. This resulted in literary and political cooperation with young Conservatives at the universities, including members of the English Mistery and the future Conservative cabinet ministers, Quintin Hogg and John Boyd-Carpenter.

This wide-ranging approach surveys the literary contributions of Conservative intellectuals, MPs, and young, would-be rising stars. It allows the mapping of both the diversity of Conservative 'voices' beneath the Baldwinite umbrella, and, the different modulations of register found on the left and right of the party. Crucially, it allows a more precise analysis of Conservative intellectual engagement with new ideas, including fascist corporatism, and, the extent to which Conservatives were prepared to countenance anti-democratic or anti-constitutional 'reforms' in the name of national renewal.

[82] Reba N. Soffer, *History, historians, and conservatism in Britain and America. From the Great War to Thatcher and Reagan* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 51-85.

Chapter One

Conservative Orators, Writers, and Publics

> The quarterlies still flourished, the serious monthlies had had no important casualties in their ranks, and under formidable titles like *The Nineteenth Century and After*, *The Contemporary*, and *The Fortnightly*, they still appeared in the same forbidding format in which they had originally made their bows to the world. The weeklies of the same quality were equally unrelenting in gravity and nomenclature…The only change to be observed was in the multiplicity of weeklies, some with pretentions to intellectuality…some more popular…But these were outside the pale in which the great monthlies and quarterlies kept their solemn state. As at Ascot, there was a form of enclosure for the elect, and safely inside it, as sure of themselves as duchesses, as sacred as any white cows, were *The Fortnightly*, *The Nineteenth Century*, *The Contemporary*, and others.
>
> They were doomed. But you would never know it if you had picked up a copy of any of them in the spring of 1929.[1]
>
> Lovat Dickson (editor of *The Fortnightly Review*, 1929-32).

Historians of the 1930s have tended to neglect Conservative literary contributions to books, periodicals, and radio in favour of archival sources, which document the inner workings of government and party politics. Recently, historians have begun to redress the balance by focusing on politicians' appeals to the public; they have focussed mainly on the rhetorical message and style of the Conservative leader, Stanley Baldwin. It is easily forgotten that Conservatives from all sections of the party used different forms of media to communicate both with each other and with wider publics. A substantial number of Conservative intellectuals, MPs, peers, and party workers, many of whom had a role in educating young Conservatives at Ashridge College, contributed to this public discourse, which was distinct from party election broadcasts, newsreels, and the popular press. Conservatives published letters in the correspondence pages of national newspapers, but few wrote weightier articles for respected broadsheets or the popular press. A systematic analysis of right-wing newspapers between June 1934 and December 1935 confirms this view. Only Edward Grigg, Keith Feiling, J.A.R. Marriott, and John Buchan wrote specially commissioned articles for *The Times* in this period; otherwise, the main contributors tended to be economic experts,

[1] Lovat Dickson, *The house of words* (London, 1963), p. 20.

such as John Maynard Keynes and Arthur Salter.[2] Similarly, only F.J.C. Hearnshaw and Baldwin published in the *Daily Telegraph* before the 1935 election.[3] No Conservatives published articles in the *Morning Post* except the lowly Earl of Bessborough.[4] Lord Beaverbrook's *Daily Express* provided an excellent political platform for its proprietor and his close circle of friends, including David Lloyd George and Viscount Caslerosse, but A.J.P. Taylor's depiction of Beaverbrook as a 'political hobgoblin' holds true for the post-1931 period.[5] Beaverbrook rarely intervened in party politics, nor did he allow the *Daily Express* to be used as a vehicle for forwarding the aims of Conservative MPs.[6] Lord Rothermere's *Daily Mail* offered occasional bouts of publicity for some Conservative MPs, but only those who advocated tariffs or strong imperial politics. Leo Amery, Robert Boothby, Randolph Churchill, Winston Churchill, Lord Hailsham, and Lord Lloyd contributed occasional articles. Baldwin and other party leaders were also allowed to publish before the 1935 election, but this practice was the exception to the rule.[7] Newspaper articles were written mostly by government ministers or party leaders during election campaigns, which meant books and periodicals remained the most important literary mediums for Conservative intellectuals and backbench MPs. However, both media benefitted from bold advertisements in the national press, which highlighted monthly contributions by

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[2] *The Times*, 11June 1934, p. 18 (Grigg); 18 December 1934, p. 15 (Feiling); 29 December 1934, pp. 11-12 (Marriott); 11 January 1935, pp. 13-14 (Buchan); 11 June 1934, pp. 13-14 (Keynes), and 25 September 1934, pp. 15-16 (Salter).

[3] For F.J.C. Hearnshaw's contributions see *Daily Telegraph*, 11 November 1935, p. 10, and, 14 November 1935, p. 14; the latter date was the day of the general election. For Stanley Baldwin's article, see *Daily Telegraph*, 12 November 1935, p. 12. On the other hand, David Lloyd George's war memoirs were deemed newsworthy or of a sufficient public interest to warrant daily serialisation throughout June 1934.

[4] Although he was Governor General of Canada until November 1935, the Earl of Bessborough was hardly an influential Conservative figure in Britain at this time. For his article, see *Morning Post*, 10 October 1935, p. 10.

[5] A.J.P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook* (Harmondsworth, 1974), pp. 428-30.

[6] For examples of articles by Lord Beaverbrook, see *Daily Express*, 18 July 1934, p.10; 18 October 1935, p. 12; and, 1 November 1935. For David Lloyd George, *Daily Express*, 2 August 1934, p. 10. For Viscount Caslerosse, *Daily Express*, 13 June 1934, p. 10; 15 June 1934, p. 12; 18 June 1934, p. 12; 2 October 1935, p. 12; 11 October 1935, p. 12; 16 October 1935, p. 12; 23 October 1935, p. 12; 6 November 1935, p. 12.

[7] For Lord Rothermere's articles, see *Daily Mail*, 13 June 1934, p. 10; 20 June 1934, p. 10. Stanley Baldwin, *Daily Mail*, 30 October 1935, p. 12. Randolph Churchill, *Daily Mail*, 27 June 1934, p. 13. Winston Churchill, *Daily Mail*, 9 June 1934, p. 19; 8 November 1935, p. 9; 12 November 1935, p. 10. Robert Boothby, *Daily Mail*, 12 July 1934, p. 10. L.S. Amery, *Daily Mail*, 19 October 1935, p. 10. Lord Lloyd, *Daily Mail*, 9 November 1935, p. 5. Lord Hailsham, *Daily Mail*, 13 November 1935, p. 10.

Conservative MPs and intellectuals.[8] Conservative radio broadcasts were also advertised in this way. Broadcasting was an important bridge between old and new media, but again only cabinet ministers and a small band of young Baldwinite Conservatives gained regular access to radio in the 1930s.[9]

But if politicians were not given regular access to write articles for newspaper readers, we do know that the 1930s witnessed important changes in the relationship between the national press and the British government. Stephen Koss first drew our attention to the fact that newspaper editors were less inclined to embrace partisan positions on the most important economic and foreign policy questions of the day. Koss insisted that 'the conduct of old-style political journalism was undermined by the belief that Westminster was a mausoleum, devoid of creative energies and therefore unworthy of respectful attention'.[10] However, more recent work has punctured holes in Koss' analysis. While it is true to argue that newspapers such as the *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, and *Daily Mirror* retained their editorial independence, the National Government was able to manipulate newspapers like *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*. Richard Cockett has shown how these newspapers abandoned their important role as watchdogs of the nation with profound consequences; Neville Chamberlain was able to sustain his policy of appeasement partly because the mass public was never educated about other potential avenues for British foreign policy.[11] Furthermore, Cockett's work exposes the value placed on weekly newspapers at the heart of the Conservative organisation. Joseph Ball, head of the National Publicity Bureau (NPB), covertly purchased the longstanding journal, *Truth*, with Conservative party funds, and through its pages defended Chamberlain against his most fierce parliamentary critics.[12] Therefore, the National Government influenced the press in other ways, but this thesis focuses on direct political messages, which MPs and intellectuals wrote for each other and their educated audiences.

Financial incentives motivated Conservatives to intellectualise their creed in public, but electoral factors were equally important. Conservatives wrote articles and books to counter,

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[8] For example, *The Times*, 1 October 1935, p. 20; and, *Morning Post*, 1 October 1935, p. 14.
[9] The nature of BBC radio and Conservative party policy regarding the selection of speakers is discussed below. Young Conservative MPs are discussed at length in Chapter Six.
[10] Stephen Koss, *The rise and fall of the political press in Britain* (London, 1990 edn.), p. 943.
[11] Richard Cockett, *Twilight of truth. Chamberlain, appeasement and the manipulation of the press* (London, 1989), pp. 187-9.
[12] Ibid., p. 10.

firstly, the left's literary activities and its increasing interest in middle-class voters, and, secondly, the BUF's attempts to outdo the Conservative party on the right with promises of new ideas and radical political 'action'. The future Labour MP, Patrick Gordon Walker, described some of these dangers for the Conservative party in a diary entry in February 1938. Gordon Walker had just returned from a Left Book Club meeting:

> The meeting looked very like a Labour meeting…The average age was young—a good many undergraduates. Nothing like so working-class a meeting as that which assembled to meet Mosley…[The Left Book Club] helps to neutralise middle sections—it undoubtedly gets many of them to vote, to subscribe money and to organise to some extent.[13]

Even in the early 1930s many Conservatives had been sensitive to the danger that their core vote might be vulnerable to the propagandist efforts of radical 'men of action', and the rise of the book clubs merely intensified these fears. However, it is undeniable that Conservatives were primarily engaged with writing for each other. In many ways, this collective thought 'world', projected in books, periodicals, and on radio, was the intellectual extension of political life at Westminster; it could initiate or enhance an MP's political career.

Mass Culture and the Periodical Press

It has long been accepted that the pace of Britain's transition from an elite to a 'mass', 'commercial', or 'common' culture was accelerated during the interwar years thanks to the catalyst of new technologies and the introduction, on a commercial scale, of new media—including cinema, radio, and the popular press. D.L. LeMahieu argued that it was only in the 1930s that Britain began to witness 'the emergence of a culture that transcended the usual boundaries of class, region, and other determinants of aesthetic taste'.[14] The same could be said about British politics following the franchise extensions of 1918 and 1928, as politicians and political parties of all backgrounds were forced to engage with an enlarged electorate. This was further complicated by the election of a National Government in the 1930s—increasingly politicians and causes were found to 'transcend "natural" constituencies and

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[13] Robert Pearce (ed.), *Patrick Gordon Walker. Political diaries 1932-1971* (London, 1991), pp. 72-3.
[14] D.L. LeMahieu, *A culture for democracy: mass communication and the cultivated mind in Britain between the wars* (Oxford, 1988), p. 4.

exist in most social divisions'.[15] The way intellectual elites responded to the challenges of new media has been the subject of much discussion in recent years. LeMahieu has shown how writers, artists, musicians, critics, and other members of the intelligentsia reacted to more democratic forms of communication centred on profit and the market-place; many accepted that the elite literary world would no longer be as influential, others chose to strike back through criticism of new media, but some sensed an opportunity for greater cultural paternalism and for influence on an unprecedented scale.[16] John Reith's work at the BBC is the best example of the latter.[17] But politicians also shared the concerns of intellectuals and were often themselves prominent writers and broadcasters, as work on Stanley Baldwin and Winston Churchill reminds us.[18] The Conservative party was the first truly to exploit radio and film in the interwar period and it would be wrong to accuse Conservatives of failing to adapt to a new 'mass' culture. However, it is argued here that even though Conservatives modernised their approach to publicising their ideas, like other political and intellectual elites they did not immediately abandon more elite forums for political communication.

One particular example demonstrates elite perceptions of the continued political importance of the periodical press in this period. Writing in the 1970s, William A. Robson, a founder of *The Political Quarterly*, portrayed such publications as the 'think-tanks' of the era:

> In launching *The Political Quarterly* we were guided by a theory about the structure of public opinion in Britain. This theory rests on the belief that all or nearly all new ideas or progressive policies begin with discussions or writing among a very restricted circle of persons of exceptional ability and concentrated interests…The membership of these elites and the circulation of their publications is very restricted, and perhaps numbers only two or three thousand persons. After intensive discussion in these narrow circles, ideas or proposals which survive and win acceptance are presented to a wider audience through the weekly papers…After this second level of discussion, ideas or proposals which survive criticism and offer promise of desirable change then break through to the mass audience in the national daily and Sunday newspapers.[19]

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[15] David Chaney, 'Audience research and the BBC in the 1930s: a mass medium comes into being', in James Curran, Anthony Smith and Pauline Wingate (eds), *Impacts and influences: essays on media power in the twentieth century* (London, 1987), p. 259.
[16] LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy*, pp. 2-3.
[17] On John Reith see D.L. LeMahieu, 'Entrepreneur of collectivism: Reith of the BBC', in Susan Pedersen and Peter Mandler (eds), *After the Victorians: private conscience and public duty, 1880-1950* (London, 1994), pp. 188-206.
[18] See Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin* (Cambridge, 1999); and, David Cannadine, *In Churchill's shadow. Confronting the past in modern Britain* (Oxford, 2003), chapter 4.
[19] William A. Robson (ed.), *The Political Quarterly in the thirties* (London, 1971), p. 11.

It is argued here that Robson's strategic view of the forming of public opinion was altogether consistent with the motives of literary Conservatives throughout the 1930s. Conservatives were not only extremely active in the periodical press but they regularly participated in BBC talks series on radio, which were then published in *The Listener*. Together, the BBC's output was viewed by Conservative elites as a hybrid form of political discourse—a potential bridge between the elite world of the periodical press and the sensationalist popular press. Talks were reinforced by *The Listener*'s function of ensuring busy elites could still follow and respond to the arguments advanced whenever they missed important broadcasts.

Returning to periodicals, historians' have long claimed that the weekly, fortnightly, monthly and quarterly reviews declined massively after the First World War compared with their heyday in the Victorian era. Decline has been measured not only in terms of circulation figures, but also in terms of the ability to influence a much larger public following the franchise extensions of 1918 and 1928. The literary historian Stefan Collini has questioned this view of a declining periodical press, even if he is forced to accept that after the introduction of new media and the specialised academic journal, its influence, like that of *The Times*, became more limited as competition for readers increased.[20] As Lovat Dickson revealed in his memoirs, the major difference between the Victorian era and the interwar years was that reviews like the *Fortnightly* relied mainly on institutional subscriptions (gentlemen's clubs, libraries, embassies, public bodies, and governments abroad) as opposed to the personal subscriptions of Britain's aristocratic, middle-class, and political elite.[21] On circulation figures, Collini is adamant that historians have succumbed to exaggerating the success of the periodical press in Victorian Britain, even if copies sold did not match exact numbers of readers. Copies of periodicals, for example, would occupy the tables of gentlemen's clubs, meaning the ratio of readers to copies is impossible to determine.[22] Collini believes that circulation figures did not change drastically between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and that while some periodicals did go out of business, it was normal practice for others to rise-up and fill the void. Rather it was their cultural role that was somewhat diminished in the early twentieth century. Collini's circulation figures for the 1860s, the period in which the Victorian reviews are assumed to have been at their peak,

[20] Stefan Collini, *Common reading: critics, historians, publics* (Oxford, 2008), p. 227.
[21] Dickson, *The house of words*, p. 21.
[22] Collini, *Common Reading*, p. 225.

reveal that the *Quarterly* sold around 8,000 copies, the *Edinburgh* 7,000, the *Westminster* 4,000, the *Fortnightly* between 2,500 and 3,000, the *Saturday* near 14,000, and *The Spectator* approximately 3,000.[23] Although it is difficult to find circulation figures for specific periodicals for the interwar period, we know that *The Spectator* had a circulation of around 22,500 in 1936.[24] The *Saturday* circulated 20,000 copies per week in 1933-6.[25] The *Nineteenth Century and After* achieved figures of around 10,000 in 1935.[26] The *Fortnightly* had a circulation of between 4 and 5,000 copies during 1929-31.[27] Numbers were, of course, always relatively small in comparison with national daily newspapers. In 1935 the *Daily Express* sold around 1.9 million copies, the *Daily Mail* approximately 1.7 million and *The Times* 180,000.[28] It is obvious, then, that periodicals retained circulation figures comparable to Victorian levels—and some increased their circulations during the early twentieth century—but periodicals were outdone by new media and it would be wrong to suggest that Conservative contributions reached mass audiences in the 1930s.

Nevertheless, Conservatives did have certain 'publics' in mind when submitting political comment for publication in periodicals. The reviews offered Conservatives space to discuss their political ideas with specific publics who they saw as interested and sympathetic or open to persuasion. Their ideas had to first win wide-spread support from elite circles before they could be adopted officially by the Conservative party; only then would they be refined for the 'masses'. The existence of a broad-based National Government meant more freedom existed for expressing alternative ideas in public in the 1930s compared with previous decades, but new ideas were often rejected by the Conservative leadership fearful that they could damage the party's performance at future elections. However, those Conservatives who suggested different political approaches contributed not only towards a 'battle of the books' but a much broader 'battle of ideas'.[29] This Conservative literary war

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[23] Collini, *Common Reading*, p. 225.
[24] AP Wadsworth, 'Newspaper circulations, 1800-1954', *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society* (1954-5), p. 39.
[25] See Dorothy Crisp, *A life for England* (Southend-on-Sea, 1946), p. 120.
[26] John Marlowe, *Late Victorian: the life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* (London, 1967), p. 318.
[27] Dickson, *The house of words*, pp. 29, 74.
[28] Tom Jeffrey and Keith McClelland, 'A world fit to live in: the *Daily Mail* and the middle classes 1918-39', in James Curran, Anthony Smith and Pauline Wingate (eds), *Impacts and influences: essays on media power in the twentieth century* (London, 1987), p. 29.
[29] See Clarisse Berthezène, 'Creating Conservative Fabians: the Conservative Party, political education and the founding of Ashridge College', *Past & Present*, 182 (2004), p. 212.

was waged throughout the pages of the periodical press and it was conducted at a time when most political and educated elites feared for Britain's constitutional stability.

It is equally evident from private correspondence that Conservatives were well aware of who read the periodical press and what language or approach was needed to engage potential readers. In January 1931 Lord Lloyd explained to the then editor of the *National Review*, Violet Milner, his own perceptions of these different Conservative publics:

> I suggest that there are three publics that need our propagandist attention. Admittedly each overlap to a certain extent but, for the purpose of argument, can be treated separately. The first two are Conservative already, the third is not. Of the two Conservative publics, I suggest there is one lot, partly in England but also largely overseas, who like their views propounded in terms of the "Nat" [*National Review*]. They have not as yet learnt from anyone to be ashamed of the Imperial spirit and do not want its existence apologised for or its fire watered down. They have learnt to admire and rely upon Leo's [Leo Amery] genius for always proving right! Personally, I belong to that public. But it does not blind me to the realisation that there is another public, also Conservative, that likes another language than the "Nat's", another approach to and exposition of the same principles. It is a more timid Conservative, who likes to be in a majority. This kind needs confirming in its views and needs to be delicately led along the path. The third is free thinking. Just as the Fabian Society lured thousands into socialism by clever propaganda, so we need some clever and disguised propaganda to lead free thinkers into Conservatism. I hoped the "*English Review*" might do this. Perhaps it still will.[30]

Lloyd, then, not only accepted the existence of these very different reading publics, but he insisted the Conservative party should embrace them all.

Conservative Writing in the Periodical Press

Certain periodicals have been researched systematically on account of the regularity of their Conservative contributors and political comment for the period 1931-7. Periodicals that wielded significant results included the *National Review*, *English Review*, *Empire Review*, *United Empire*, *Nineteenth Century and After*, *Quarterly Review*, *Fortnightly Review*, *Saturday Review*, *Spectator*, and, finally, the *Ashridge Journal*. Others published occasional articles by Conservatives; these were the *Contemporary Review*, *Cornhill Magazine*, and *The Political Quarterly*. The *Week-end Review* and *New Statesman* were not consulted because Conservatives seldom submitted articles for publication, and when they did they were

[30] George Lloyd to Violet Milner, 19 January 1931, Violet Milner papers, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Violet Milner. Box 45.c.420/2.

usually left unsigned or written under a pseudonym.[31] This section addresses the nature of the periodicals used here, including their aims, readership, and political background. We shall start with three of the most right-wing periodicals, the *National Review*, *English Review*, and *Saturday Review*.

The *National Review* was most representative of the traditional right-wing or 'diehard' section of the Conservative party, which included members of the imperialist and colonial elite throughout the British Empire; Lord Lloyd was perhaps the most authoritative example of this group in the 1930s. Under Leo Maxse, the *National Review*'s circulation figures peaked at 10,000 copies, but when his sister Violet Milner assumed control in 1929, it had already fallen on hard times. This is evident from the reduction in numbers of pages and by the reprinting of material from the Victorian and Edwardian periods.[32] Likewise, the *English Review* did not fully live up to Lloyd's expectations. It was eventually sold because of a lack of readers before being absorbed by the *National Review* in 1937.[33] Much has been made of the *English Review* and its luncheon club.[34] As one historian explained, the journalists Douglas Jerrold (editor) and Charles Petrie (foreign editor) used the venture as a platform for 'real Toryism'.[35] This was similar to the editorial direction of the *National Review*, only it was more radical; Petrie advocated the adoption of a corporate state in Britain based on the Italian Fascist model.[36] Some influential Conservatives published in the *English Review* while Jerrold was editor, but it is noteworthy that contributions from high-profile members of the party had all but ceased by 1935. The *English Review* attracted a number of pro-Fascist journalists, but not many potential recruits for the Conservative party.

By the mid-1930s the *Saturday Review* was more extreme than the *English Review*. It did not wield significant results for the period 1934-6 compared with 1931-3 because it was

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[31] See C.H. Rolph, *Kingsley: the life, letters and diaries of Kingsley Martin* (London, 1973), p. 169. The author claims Robert Boothby and Walter Elliot were occasional contributors to the *New Statesman* under Kingsley Martin's editorship in the 1930s.

[32] Carol de Saint Victor, 'The National Review', in Alvin Sullivan (ed.), *British literary magazines: the Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913* (London, 1984), pp. 242-50. Leo Maxse was editor between 1893 and 1929.

[33] Jason Tomes, 'Jerrold, Douglas Francis (1893–1964)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34185, accessed 15 March 2010]. See also Violet Milner's letter to *The Times*, 30 June 1937.

[34] See Richard Griffiths, *Fellow travellers of the right: British enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933-39* (Oxford, 1983); and more recently, William Frame, 'The Conservative Party and domestic reconstruction, 1931-35' (unpublished PhD thesis: Royal Holloway, University of London, 1999).

[35] Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers*, p. 22.

[36] Petrie is briefly discussed in Chapters Three and Four.

bought by the infamous Lady Houston, who strictly controlled its output until her death in 1936. Not only did it adopt red ink and a sensationalist tone, but Houston used its pages to promote Mussolini and Hitler.[37] The *Saturday Review*'s outstanding circulation figures demonstrate that there was indeed a reservoir of proto-fascist feeling in 1930s Britain. But the last Conservative politician to write for the review was Patrick Donner in January 1934; the mainstream of British political life deserted the publication when Houston made her impact. The *Saturday Review* is useful for the period before Houston destroyed its credibility amongst political elites, but thereafter it is most important for the contributions of Dorothy Crisp, a conservative journalist, writer, and intellectual, who contributed important articles throughout 1933-6 (including around sixty pieces under the name of Thomas Polson).[38] She was a rallying-point for young, radical Conservatives in the early 1930s and continued to be an important voice for the remainder of the decade.[39]

There were two other periodicals that focussed heavily on imperial matters, the *Empire Review and Magazine* and *United Empire*. The *Empire Review* was edited by the former Conservative MP, Clement Kinloch-Cooke. It was formed to discuss imperial issues and while this might suggest a more selective reading public, it seems the review's initial mandate was enlarged before the 1930s. Although a majority of its articles focussed on empire, a minority were always published on domestic politics and its editorial notes were often a combination of the two. Imperialists and educated elites, who were interested in imperial affairs, made up its core readership. Kinloch-Cooke also argued that it was meant to appeal to the general reading public in order to help 'educate' men and women who had little experience of imperial matters.[40] The *Empire Review*, in contrast with both the *National* and *English* reviews, was generally supportive of the National Government, which meant it occupied a slightly different public literary space in the 1930s.

United Empire was another periodical that focused on imperial developments. It was the official journal of the Royal Empire Society (formerly the Royal Colonial Institute), which worked with government bodies, local authorities, and universities to promote a united

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[37] Kerry Powell, 'Saturday Review', in Alvin Sullivan (ed.), *British literary magazines: the Victorian and Edwardian age, 1837-1913* (London, 1984), p. 382.
[38] Thomas Polson was a real person. For biographical information see Chapter Five.
[39] Crisp's work is discussed at length in Chapter Five.
[40] *Empire Review*, 1 (February 1901), p. 1.

British Empire.[41] The Institute itself was a meeting place in London for the 'reading of papers and discussion on subjects of Indian and "Colonial" interest'.[42] Its reading-room contained complete files of overseas periodicals and the Library was supposedly 'the most complete of its kind in the world'.[43] Two-thirds of the Institute's members were overseas in 1910, which originally prompted the idea for a new monthly journal.[44] Numerous Conservatives contributed towards the organisation through lectures, speeches, and discussions, which were recorded and published in the journal throughout the 1930s. The organisation also co-operated with the British Commonwealth Union and the Primrose League.[45] Importantly, *United Empire* reached an international audience, which was beyond the means of most rival periodicals. The Royal Empire Society and its work, as revealed through its journal, is yet another example of Conservative involvement in non-party voluntary organisations, which promoted constitutional government throughout Britain and the Empire during the interwar period.[46]

Conservatives also wrote regularly for more general periodicals such as the *Nineteenth Century and After*, *Quarterly Review*, and *Fortnightly Review*, and with less frequency for the *Contemporary Review*, *Cornhill Magazine*, and *The Political Quarterly*. The historian John Marlowe described the *Nineteenth Century and After* as 'a serious-minded, independent journal, which prided itself on its impartiality in political matters, although it had, on the whole, always been inclined slightly to the Right'.[47] Carrol Romer, the review's editor from 1925, was a successful barrister and resigned to concentrate on a legal career in 1930. Under Cromer there were no editorials or reviews and only occasional correspondence. This reflected the traditional approach of the *Nineteenth Century*, which concentrated on full length articles by famous writers and politicians. This approach was continued under the editorship of Charles Harris between 1930 and 1935.[48] Harris was a leader writer on both

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[41] *United Empire* was the product of a merger between the *Journal of the Royal Colonial Institute* and the *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*.
[42] See the editor's forward to *United Empire*, 1 (January 1910), p. 2.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., p. 3.
[45] Peter Barberis, John McHugh, Mike Tyldesley (eds), *Encyclopedia of British and Irish political organizations: parties, groups and movements in the twentieth century* (London, 2000), p. 104.
[46] This debate has been explored recently; see Helen McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain', *Historical Journal*, 50 (December 2007), pp. 891-912.
[47] Marlowe, *Late Victorian*, p. 318.
[48] See Arnold Wilson to Stanley Baldwin, c.1935, Cambridge University Library, Stanley Baldwin papers, 170/272.

The Times (1925-35) and *The Economist* (1932-35) throughout this period. It was not until Harris's departure that the review was modified slightly under the editorship of the Conservative MP, Arnold Wilson. Wilson outlined the *Nineteenth Century*'s role in his first issue in May 1935: 'The *Nineteenth Century* was established nearly sixty years ago, to provide, in the words of its founder, James Knowles, "an entirely free and open field, where all forms of honest opinion and belief (represented by men of sufficient weight) should be not only tolerated but welcomed." From this principle there will be no departure.'[49] However, Henry Wickham Steed for one doubted the sincerity of this claim, writing to the Duchess of Atholl in September 1936, '[S]ometimes I doubt whether Sir Arnold Wilson is quite sane. As editor of the Nineteenth Century he played me a trick which I cannot conceive any fair minded editor lending himself to. He is fanatically pro-Nazi and pro-Fascist while pretending to keep an open mind.'[50] Notwithstanding Wilson's own political views (which Chapter Seven argues were rather more nuanced than this suggests) it is evident that his editorship did not radically change the review's character or prevent contributions being made from either wing of the Conservative party.[51] However, Wilson was more active editorially, introducing his own regular series of articles on encounters with his constituents, entitled 'Walks and Talks', and a review of books. Compared with both the *Quarterly* and *Fortnightly* reviews, both the *Nineteenth Century and After* and the *National Review* were more consistent platforms for literary Conservatives who were keen to reach an educated public.

The *Quarterly Review* prided itself on being a progressive Conservative 'voice'. It was owned throughout its history by the Murray family and was edited by both the staunch Tory John Murray V and C.E. Lawrence in the 1930s. In its 500th issue, which appeared in July 1929, it argued that it had taken the lead in supporting nineteenth century social reforms, advocating the end of the slave trade and child labour. But one authority on the *Quarterly* argues that its 'tone was less harsh and its criticism far less malicious' in the twentieth century, although 'one could characterize the politics of both the nineteenth- and twentieth-

[49] Arnold Wilson, 'Walks and talks', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 117 (May 1935), p. 624.
[50] Henry Wickham Steed to Duchess of Atholl, 11 September 1936, Blair Atholl, Blair Castle, Duchess of Atholl papers, 90/7. Henry Wickham Steed was a journalist, but also a broadcaster; he was the editor of *The Times* between 1919 and 1922.
[51] A view endorsed by Wilson's biographer, see Marlowe, *Late Victorian*, p. 320.

century runs of the *Quarterly* as generally enlightened conservatism'.[52] It was not until the 1940s that the *Quarterly* began to resemble a spent force from a by-gone age. In terms of political content the *Fortnightly Review* was similar to the *Quarterly*. Since the death of its long-time editor, William Leonard Courtney, in 1928, the literary side of the review declined, but its political content was sustained under new direction.[53] Collini argues that it was 'a pale shadow of its great nineteenth-century self and hardly an influential organ of opinion in the 1930s'.[54] But if the *Fortnightly* no longer inspired the imagination of the literary world, politicians still contributed to its pages and their work was no doubt read within their own elite circles if nowhere else.

The *Contemporary Review* has always represented a liberal tradition and, as one of its editors, G.P. Gooch (1911-60), observed, it was 'just a little to the left of the centre, abhorring extremes on either side of the line'.[55] Gooch was the Liberal MP for Bath between 1906 and January 1910. After the First World War he transformed the *Contemporary* into a leading monthly on foreign affairs. But it also published articles on social conditions, history, education, travel, and the arts. Furthermore, essays on European literature were increasingly commonplace during the 1930s because Gooch had 'strong personal and intellectual ties with Germany' and was appalled by Nazism.[56] As one scholar concluded, 'It was never the role of the *Contemporary* to appeal to the semi-literate Victorian reader of pulp fiction or to the modern patron of the bingo halls. It is directed now, as it was in its beginnings, at educated, informed readers concerned about the arts and about events in the world around them'.[57] Only a few Conservatives published in the *Contemporary* and those who did tended to be academics or members of the centre-left of the party.

The *Cornhill Magazine* was famous in the Victorian era for its innovative approach of serialising novels by popular writers such as William Thackeray—the magazine's first

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[52] See Raymond N. MacKenzie, 'Quarterly Review', in Alvin Sullivan (ed.), *British literary magazines: the modern age, 1914-1984* (London, 1986), pp. 389-392. Also on John Murray (V & VI) see William Zachs, Peter Isaac, Angus Fraser, and William Lister, 'Murray family (*per.* 1768–1967)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edition, May 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/64907, accessed 10 June 2008].
[53] Dickie A. Spurgeon, 'Fortnightly Review', in Alvin Sullivan (ed.), *British literary magazines: the modern age, 1914-1984* (London, 1986), p. 182.
[54] Collini, *Common Reading*, p. 159.
[55] Muriel J. Mellown, 'The Contemporary Review', in Alvin Sullivan (ed.), *British literary magazines: the modern age, 1914-1984* (London, 1986), p. 92.
[56] Ibid., p. 95.
[57] Ibid., p. 101.

editor: '[T]he public flocked to a magazine that gave a serial instalment of a novel, short stories, poetry, and articles for the amount of money they had formerly paid for a serial part of a novel alone.'[58] Even in the 1930s the *Cornhill* was primarily a review of literature and poetry, rather than politics. The two, however, are not always distinct and it published occasional articles on politics. These were written by Conservatives such as Quintin Hogg, Godfrey Locker-Lampson, and J.A.R. Marriott. Leonard Huxley retired as the magazine's editor in July 1933, which allowed the Labour peer Lord Gorell to take up the post until 1939.[59] Although accurate circulation figures do not survive for the interwar period, we can compare its performance in the nineteenth century with that of the twentieth century; its circulation ranged from 20,000 in 1870 to 12,000 in 1882, compared with 20,000 in 1954 and 10,000 in 1955.[60] It is likely that the *Cornhill*'s circulation was at least on par with most other monthly periodicals of its type throughout the 1930s.

The *Political Quarterly*, founded by Kingsley Martin and William A. Robson, first went to press in 1930. It differed from the other reviews because it was a left-wing journal and only a handful of Conservatives ever published there, including Robert Boothby, Walter Elliot, Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, and Eustace Percy.[61] The editors (Leonard Woolf and Robson) clarified the reasons behind its existence in 1932:

> The function of *The Political Quarterly* is to discuss social and political questions from a progressive point of view; to act as a clearing-house of ideas and a medium of constructive thought…*The Political Quarterly* should be valuable to the active politician, to the administrator, to the expert, to the teacher, and to other leaders of thought in every country.[62]

The *Political Quarterly* was always an elite enterprise. It was meant to bridge the gap between the intellectual world of ideas and practical politics.[63]

The Spectator was an altogether different entity. Those involved with the right-wing book clubs believed they were purposefully offering a middlebrow alternative to the

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[58] J. Don Vann, 'The Cornhill Magazine', in Alvin Sullivan (ed.), *British literary magazines: the Victorian and Edwardian age, 1837-1913* (London, 1984), p. 82.
[59] Lord Gorell was a loyal follower of Ramsay MacDonald and the National Government in the 1930s and not of the official opposition. See his letter to *The Times*, 22 October 1931.
[60] See Don Vann, 'The Cornhill Magazine', p. 83; and, Barbara Quinn Schmidt, 'The Cornhill Magazine', in Alvin Sullivan (ed.), *British literary magazines: the modern age, 1914-1984* (London, 1986), p. 108.
[61] Interestingly, it was Harold Macmillan, a left-wing Conservative, who sanctioned the publication of *The Political Quarterly*. See Rolph, *Kingsley*, p. 141.
[62] *The Political Quarterly*, 3 (January-March 1932), p. 1.
[63] Robson (ed.), *The Political Quarterly*, p. 10.

highbrow articles of political magazines like the *The Spectator*.[64] But the facts speak for themselves; *The Spectator* reached a much larger audience than any of the right-wing periodicals or book clubs. As shown, its 1936 weekly circulation of 22,500 copies was impressive, but it was still outdone by other weekly competitors. The left-wing *New Statesman* circulated 25,000 copies per week during the same period, while the BBC's *The Listener* magazine achieved figures of around 50,000 copies per week. *The Economist* managed only 9,000 copies. These trends continued throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, but these magazines had doubled their circulation figures by the end of the Second World War; levels that were sustained until the early 1950s.[65] *The Spectator* had always been the mouthpiece of an elite and mainly Conservative literate minority. Conservatives were restricted mainly to single page articles in the *The Spectator*, but these were read by a much larger audience compared to monthly or quarterly reviews.

Finally, the *Ashridge Journal* differed to all other periodicals because it was attached to the Conservative party's unofficial training college, Ashridge; it was far more partisan than other periodicals, despite its claims of bi-partisanship. The Conservative historian Arthur Bryant was the journal's editor and John Buchan was its chairman; both, as we know, were close to Baldwin and the party leadership.[66] Bryant set-out the aims for the journal in the first issue. Attempting to nuance its political role, Bryant wrote, 'Our aim is not entirely political—at least not in its narrowest sense—though in the broadest all we do that is not purely personal or selfish must be political, since politics is the whole art of living in the world reasonably and amicably with our neighbours.'[67] The journal was a place for the advertising and subsequent publication of lectures delivered at Ashridge, mainly by prominent Conservative politicians and intellectuals—though some work was specially commissioned for the journal.[68] Bryant made a plethora of contributions himself and regularly reviewed books for subscribers. He recommended books by active Conservative

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[64] E.H.H. Green, 'The battle of the books: book clubs and Conservatism in the 1930s', in E.H.H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative political ideas in the twentieth century* (Oxford, 2002), p. 153.
[65] AP Wadsworth, 'Newspaper Circulations, 1800-1954', p. 39.
[66] The best work on the working relationship of Baldwin, Bryant, and Buchan is Berthezène, 'Creating Conservative Fabians', 211-40. See also Julia Stapleton, *Sir Arthur Bryant and national history in twentieth-century Britain* (Lanham, 2005), chapters 4-6.
[67] [Arthur Bryant] 'Editorial', *Ashridge Journal*, 1 (February, 1930), p. 1.
[68] See Clarisse Berthezène, 'Ashridge College, 1929-54: a glimpse at the archive of a Conservative intellectual project', *Contemporary British History* 19 (2005), p. 80.

intellectuals, including F.J.C. Hearnshaw, Hugh Sellon, and Dorothy Crisp (discussed in Chapters Three, Four, and Five). There is no indication of numbers of readers of the journal in the 1930s, but Bryant did give figures for the number of students attending courses at Ashridge in the first years after its founding in 1929. Just 1,995 students attended in 1931—the result of a yearly increase of around 250 students since 1929.[69] Even if numbers continued to increase steadily throughout the rest of the decade it is unlikely that they ever amounted to more than an additional several thousand. With this in mind, the journal would seem to have attracted a similar-sized audience at best. To some extent the *Ashridge Journal* preached to the converted, but it was nevertheless another rhetorical and intellectual outlet for literary Conservatives in the 1930s.

The content of the periodical press confirms the view that the 1930s was an intensely political decade and it suggests a high purchase for political literature within elite circles. Alvin Sullivan states, the 'avoidance of politics became in itself a political act, and no magazine was able quietly to ignore the surge of events'. [70] A new generation of 'modernist' writers, including many continental Europeans, challenged readers to abandon British political orthodoxies in favour of revolutionary politics in the same way as radical writers had called for systematic change after the French Revolution in the nineteenth century or the Bolshevik uprising of 1917. Conservatives 'voices' were determined to play an active role in this intellectual ferment and used periodicals to defend their case against both radical right and extreme left-wing ideas.

Publishing Conservatism

If periodicals were an important literary space for making reputations, they were also a staging-post for Conservatives who wrote political books for more specific audiences. A series of successful articles could enhance an author's literary reputation and strengthen his or her bargaining position in advance of negotiations for book contracts. Publishers and academic readers (who sanctioned political books) had to be convinced that an author's work

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[69] [Arthur Bryant] 'Editorial', *Ashridge Journal*, 9 (March, 1932), p. 8.
[70] See preface to Alvin Sullivan (ed.), *British literary magazines: the modern age, 1914-1984* (London, 1986), pp. vii-xxi.

would result in reasonable profits.[71] Only high-profile figures like Winston Churchill could rely on their 'box office' status, and an already well-established literary reputation, to make sure they reached their intended audiences. But who made-up these audiences or reading publics and how large were they?

The readership for political books can be measured using print-run statistics produced by publishers in the 1930s. As one of the main publishers of political books Macmillan and Co's records allow us to shed useful light on political publishing at this time. Macmillan and Co. was then one of the most successful publishers and the Conservative MP Harold Macmillan was already an active partner in the business by the 1930s. Books written by Conservatives are comparable, in terms of number of print-runs and copies, to all other titles published by Macmillan and Co. at this time, including books by left-wing politicians and intellectuals. However, textbooks, educational titles, and the classics, were printed regularly and outsold all other books for obvious reasons. The statistics show that most books achieved only one print-run of between 1,500 and 3,000 copies. This applied to F.J.C. Hearnshaw's *Conservatism in England*, which ran to only 2,000 copies. Some books were marginally more successful and demanded further print-runs. Edward Grigg's *The Faith of an Englishman* resulted in 2,000 copies from its initial run, but was re-printed as a cheap edition one year later; its final total was 4,000 copies. Political manifestos, which were smaller and cheaper, appealed to a wider readership: *A National Policy: An Account of the Emergency Programme Advanced by Sir Oswald Mosley*, achieved impressive figures of 22,250 copies in 1931, while *The Next Five Years: An Essay in Political Agreement* managed 8,000 copies in 1935. Alfred Zimmern's *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, 1918-1935*, is an example of a book that achieved 6,000 copies over the course of four print-runs; this was no doubt partly due to its strong affiliation with an active political organisation, the League of Nations Union.[72] More detailed evidence from the archives of Oxford University Press (OUP) suggests broadly similar print runs. For example, OUP printed 3,000 copies of Arnold Wilson's *Walks and Talks* in June 1934. Of these, 2,521 copies were sold in the UK, 100 in the USA, and 210 elsewhere by March 1935. This led to

[71] F.J.C. Hearnshaw was one of the most popular academics used by Macmillan and Co. to evaluate books of a political nature. See Agenda Books 1-9, London, British Library Manuscripts, Archive of Macmillan and Co., Add. 56027.

[72] New Books & New Editions 19-21 (13 August 1929 – 16 May 1939), London, British Library Manuscripts, Archive of Macmillan and Co., Add. 55928, Add. 55029, Add. 55930.

its second print-run of 2,000 copies later in the year.[73] Therefore, it is safe to assume that the bulk of the market for Conservative literary works was in the UK.

The scale of production of political books confirms that they were written for elite markets. The sales figures are also consistent with records of right-wing book clubs. E.H.H. Green states that the National Book Association had only 5,000 subscribers in May 1939, while the Right Book Club had between 5,000 and 10,000 members. Books that were printed and circulated by right-wing book clubs do not seem to have eclipsed the readership of those published under normal circumstances. This, however, is in stark contrast to the demand for books on the left of British politics, which always outweighed demand on the right; Victor Gollancz's Left Book Club reached 50,000 members in 1936.[74] But, as Ross McKibbin has shown, the most successful political novel of the decade sold 150,000 copies in just five months in 1937.[75] A.J. Cronin's *The Citadel* was promoted through a series of books clubs, including the Left Book Club, which reminds us of the importance of marketing if authors wanted to reach a 'mass' audience.[76] Only rarely did Conservatives harbour such ambitions. Edward Grigg made a number of attempts to convince right-wing book clubs to circulate a cheaper edition of his *The Faith of an Englishman*. When his efforts failed Harold Macmillan suggested that the only way to proceed was to found a new book club: 'I begin to feel very strongly again that we should start an independent Book Club on proper lines, and I shall certainly go into that again after the holidays…my book might be the first to be issued by such a Club or Association.'[77] The endeavour failed because both Grigg's and Macmillan's books were published by Macmillan and Co. under conventional circumstances.

However, there were other ways to increase circulation figures on the right. Some Conservative books were promoted by CCO through recommended reading lists. These appeared in every edition of *Politics In Review* and were intended for consumption by party workers; copies were also made available for consultation at the Conservative Central Office Reference Library. Some books were promoted more than others. Hugh Sellon's *Democracy and Dictatorship* was labelled 'The Book of the Hour' by *Politics In Review* between April

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[73] Oxford University Press Archives, CA54/3819.
[74] Green, 'The Battle of the Books', pp. 153-4.
[75] Ross McKibbin, 'Politics and the medical hero: A.J. Cronin's The Citadel', *English Historical Review* CXXIII (2008), p. 661.
[76] Ibid., pp. 662-76.
[77] Harold Macmillan to Edward Grigg, 29 July 1937, Oxford, Bodleian Library, 1st Lord Altrincham (Sir Edward Grigg) papers, MS.Film 1005.

and September 1934. It could be ordered direct from the Conservative and Unionist Association.[78] Again, Grigg's *The Faith of an Englishman* is the best example for illustrating the potential party political audience of Conservative books. Harold Macmillan told Grigg: 'You may like to know that the Conservative and Unionist Central Office is using 5,000 copies of a prospectus of your book for a general distribution throughout the organisation.'[79] Grigg's personal papers also record the names of political elites who received complimentary copies of his book on the eve of its publication. Between 50 and 60 copies were sent to notable political figures including L.S. Amery, Clement Atlee, Lord Beaverbrook, Austen Chamberlain, Lady Davidson, Cuthbert Headlam, Neville Chamberlain, Henry Drummond Wolff, W.S. Morrison, James Maxton, and Thomas Dugdale. Copies were also sent to important publicists and editors such as W.P. Crozier (*Manchester Guardian*), J.L. Garvin (*The Observer*), H.A. Gwynne (*Morning Post*), and Viscountess Milner (*National Review*).[80] Politicians also left more direct clues about their intended audiences. Leo Amery, who wrote many articles for the periodical press, outlined the aims for his book *The Forward View* in his diary in January 1936:

> Duncan and Diana Sandys to dine….he very much inspired by my Forward View and anxious to get together a nucleus of members who treating it as their bible will systematically press for an Empire policy….I should like to see something come of it, for after all I did not write the book for the mere pleasure of literary expression, but in order to bring back our party to the Empire idea.[81]

Conservatives hoped their books would have an impact on political circles. Another Conservative diarist, Cuthbert Headlam, stated how the flow of books at this time could often be exasperating for an MP, but he saw them as a necessary evil: 'There is such a spate of books nowadays about current topics that one simply must read some of them—either from the "Left Book Club" or the "Right Book Club". Most of them are pretty poor stuff—written off by journalists who either like or dislike dictators.'[82] It seems books written by Conservative MPs were paid more attention by their political colleagues compared with

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[78] See *Politics In Review*, Volumes 1-3, January-September 1934.
[79] Harold Macmillan to Edward Grigg, 2 December 1936, Oxford, Bodleian Library, 1st Lord Altrincham (Sir Edward Grigg) papers, MS.Film 1004.
[80] This information is gleaned from lists and correspondence throughout the entire microfilm reel. Oxford, Bodleian Library, 1st Lord Altrincham (Sir Edward Grigg) papers, MS.Film 1004.
[81] John Barnes and David Nicholson (eds), *The Empire at bay: the Leo Amery diaries, 1929-1945* (London, 1988), p. 407.
[82] Stuart Ball (ed.), *Parliament and politics in the age of Churchill and Atlee: the Headlam diaries, 1935-1951* (London, 1999), pp. 127-8 (10 April 1938).

those written by journalists. Grigg recommended to the Duchess of Atholl that she read his *The Faith of an Englishman* if she wanted to fully articulate his views on the Spanish Civil War: 'It is all in my book—as clear as I can put it—and that comes out on Friday next.'[83] Arnold Wilson also revealed the potential audience for Conservative books in *Walks and Talks*; a book based on his diary, which recalled his conversations and encounters with constituents in Hitchin. Wilson described his encounters for the benefit of political elites. The aim of his book was to convince readers of the importance of territorial representation to parliamentary government and democracy.[84] Furthermore, we know that Conservatives read Wilson's books because Alan Lennox Boyd wrote in his diary that he and others argued about Wilson's capacity to write about public opinion in the country.[85]

However, although both the periodical press and published books gave Conservative writers access to educated readerships, there was no guarantee that Conservative literary work would be valued by the party hierarchy. In 1931 the Marquess of Salisbury recommended to Stanley Baldwin's Private Secretary Geoffrey Fry that his friend and former Conservative MP John Marriott be nominated for a peerage on the basis of his literary work.[86] Salisbury wrote to Fry claiming Marriott 'has done an enormous amount of work, both with his pen and with his voice, for the party'.[87] On another occasion Salisbury pleaded with Fry to reward Marriott: '[H]e has done yeoman service for the party—and I therefore think for the country—in propaganda, using that word in its highest sense, a[s] something more than mere party advocacy.'[88] Despite Salisbury's efforts, Fry rejected Marriott's claims because he was blamed by CCO for losing two 'safe' Conservative seats at previous elections.[89] Politicians and intellectuals showed much interest in each others publications and Conservatives saw them as influential contributions to a discursive 'world'

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[83] See Edward Grigg to the Duchess of Atholl, 22 October 1936, Blair Atholl, Blair Castle, Duchess of Atholl papers, 90/5. The Duchess confirmed her interest in the book in her reply to Grigg on 26 October 1936.
[84] Arnold Wilson, *Walks and talks: the diary of a member of parliament in 1933-4* (Oxford, 1934), p. viii.
[85] Viscount Boyd of Merton Diary, 23 July 1934, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Viscount Boyd of Merton papers, MS.Eng.c.3338.
[86] J.A.R. Marriott is discussed at length in Chapter Two.
[87] Marquess of Salisbury to Geoffrey Fry, 14 December 1931, Cambridge University Library, Stanley Baldwin papers, 167/236.
[88] Marquess of Salisbury to Geoffrey Fry, 16 March 1932, Cambridge University Library, Stanley Baldwin papers, 167/241.
[89] Geoffrey Fry to Marquess of Salisbury, 22 March 1932, Cambridge University Library, Stanley Baldwin papers, 167/245.

of ideas, but electoral success mattered most to CCO. This reinforces the arguments of E.H.H. Green and Duncan Tanner: intellectuals' and politicians' ideas are often influential within broad political cultures and help to reinforce (or disrupt) existing attitudes, but their political impact might not be as important as some historians wish to believe.[90] A cautious approach must, then, be kept in mind when making claims about the potential impact of Conservative political ideas and the sources that reveal them.

Broadcasting Conservatism

Historians have not utilised political radio broadcasts as a historical source in quite the same way as cinema or film for the 1930s. The survival of pre-election film footage of Stanley Baldwin and Ramsay MacDonald in 1931 encouraged historians to pay significant attention to discrepancies of style between the two men. How this might have impacted on party political performance has been a prominent investigative feature of the historiography and only Philip Williamson has paid significant attention to the actual messages of a politician's broadcasts.[91] But a large number of Conservatives broadcast their views and this output deserves more attention than it has so far been given. Not all talks scripts survive, but by combining transcripts reproduced in the BBC's weekly magazine *The Listener* with files from the BBC's Written Archives at Caversham, it is possible to develop a detailed picture of political broadcasting in the 1930s. Only when politicians were refused permission to broadcast—as were Winston Churchill and Oswald Mosley on several occasions—have

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[90] E.H.H. Green and D.M. Tanner (eds), *The strange survival of Liberal England: political leaders, moral values and the reception of economic debate* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 27.

[91] On Baldwin's use of new media see David Cannadine, 'Politics, propaganda and art: the case of two "Worcestershire lads"', *Midland History* 4 (1977), pp. 97-122. Siân Nicholas, 'The construction of a national identity: Stanley Baldwin, "Englishness" and the mass media in inter-war Britain', in Martin Francis & Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (eds), *The Conservatives and British society, 1880-1990* (Cardiff, 1996), pp. 127-46. John Ramsden, 'Baldwin and film', in Nicholas Pronay & D.W. Spring (eds.), *Propaganda, politics and film 1918-45* (London, 1982), pp. 126-43. Bill Schwarz, 'The language of constitutionalism: Baldwinite Conservatism', in *Formations of Nations and People* (1984), pp. 1-18. Richard Cockett, 'The party, publicity and the media', in Anthony Seldon & Stuart Ball (eds), *Conservative century: the Conservative Party since 1900* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 549-64; Nicholas Pronay, 'British newsreels in the 1930s: (2) Their policy and impact', *History*, 57 (1972), pp. 63-72. On radio broadcasts and the substance of Baldwin's message see Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, pp. 83-5.

historians shown much interest in political broadcasts.[92] Historiography, in this respect, has tended to concentrate on the internal workings of the BBC, including censorship, personnel and the organizing of talks' series, rather than analysing its output and public message. The exception to the rule has been work on the role of the BBC's first Director-General John Reith, whose influence guaranteed positive discussion of topics such as parliamentary government, democracy, and the constitution on the airwaves.[93] This thesis builds upon work by scholars who have used Baldwin, Reith, and the BBC to aid our understanding of interwar British political culture in the 1930s. But only the content and frequency of Conservative broadcast talks interest us here. This has meant a systematic review of Conservative broadcast talks, not the reporting of news or daily parliamentary activity, which so often provoked controversy from all major political parties.[94] However, before one can discuss the Conservative party's use of radio, it is first necessary to discuss the social constituency and general role of broadcasting in Britain during the 1930s. By drawing on primary sources such as Mass Observation file reports and other surveys conducted on behalf of the BBC, it is possible to give some indication of the potential impact of Conservative broadcast talks on members of the Conservative party and the general listening public. As nearly all broadcast talks were published in *The Listener*, both its readership and its role in accompanying broadcasts warrant discussion. Finally, it is important to consider how CCO and the NPB under Joseph Ball viewed the role of political broadcasting in comparison with different print media.

Asa Briggs, in his seminal work on the history of broadcasting, stated that there were 2,178,259 radio licence-holders when the BBC was founded in 1927, compared to 9,082,666 in 1939. We also know that between March 1929 and March 1933 the number of licence-holders doubled.[95] This is particularly impressive when one remembers that these years witnessed the 1931 crisis, which signalled the beginning of the worst of the economic depression. As Ross McKibbin suggests, it reveals radio's importance 'as an instrument of

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[92] On Churchill's difficulties see Asa Briggs, *The golden age of the wireless* (Oxford, 1995 edn.), p. 135. On Mosley see James Curran and Jean Seaton (eds), *Power without responsibility: the press and broadcasting in Britain*, (London, 1991 edn.), pp. 143-4.

[93] On John Reith and the BBC, see LeMahieu, 'John Reith', pp. 191-210; and, *A culture for democracy*. Also, Charles Stewart (ed.), *The Reith diaries* (London, 1975).

[94] On the Conservative side a good example is Joseph Ball's comments in a memorandum addressed to Neville Chamberlain, June 1938, p. 5, Birmingham University Library, Neville Chamberlain papers, NC8/21/8.

[95] Briggs, *The golden age*, p. 235.

consolation'.[96] Figures relating to licence-holders, however, do not give an accurate number of listeners. Reith believed that there were between 14 and 15 million listeners as early as 1930.[97] Furthermore, Briggs claimed that 98 per cent of the population had access to at least one BBC programme by 1935. He also said that 85 per cent of the population had access to an alternative BBC programme via regional services, which appealed more to the working-classes because they addressed local concerns.[98] We can never know, however, exactly how many people had access to a radio because some built their own (parts were available) or refused to pay the license fee. Some even paid relay stations to transmit by wire radio stations' programmes to loudspeakers in their homes. This arrangement is thought to have accounted for at least 205,000 homes with an estimated audience of one million listeners in 1935.[99] It is legitimate, then, to assume that broadcast talks were accessible for a majority of the population without obtaining definitive figures for the 1930s.

However, it is important that one does not overstate radio's importance in 'educating' the public through political broadcasts because it is impossible to know who exactly listened-in to particular talks or programmes, and what, if anything, they took from them. This is because the BBC only created its Listener Research Department in 1936. For the remainder of the decade its organisers favoured 'research projects concerned with market conditions rather than particular programmes' effectiveness and/or success'.[100] Detailed information on the reception of political talks does not exist until the war years, but we do know that many aired between 8 and 9.30 in the evening—peak times in the 1930s.[101] Evidence gleaned from Mass-Observation file reports and a one-off study commissioned by the BBC also gives some indication of the impact of political talks on listeners.

Mass-Observation file reports began in 1937 but assessments of the impact of political talks began in 1939 and data was then complicated by the war. Despite such problems they convey some sense of listening habits and how people responded to political talks throughout

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[96] Ross McKibbin, *Classes and cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), p. 457.
[97] Nicholas, 'The Construction of a National Identity', p. 134.
[98] Briggs, *The golden age*, p. 235; and on the BBC's regional services and the move towards alternative programming, ibid., pp. 271-313; and, LeMahieu, *A culture for democracy*, pp. 286-7. On class issues of local programming see McKibbin, *Classes and cultures*, p. 465.
[99] See Siân Nicholas, 'The people's radio? The BBC and its audience 1939-45', in Nick Hayes and Jeff Hill (eds), *Millions like us? British culture in the Second World War* (Liverpool, 1999), p. 64; and, LeMahieu, *A culture for democracy*, pp. 276-7.
[100] Chaney, 'Audience research and the BBC', p. 271.
[101] Briggs, *The golden age,* p. 238.

the 1930s and 40s. One specific example documents public responses to talks on the war by both Ellen Wilkinson and Richard Crossman in 1940. The report revealed complex listening habits and problems faced during early social surveys:

> Almost twice as many people heard Wilkinson's broadcast as heard Crossman's on June 2nd…About 20% admitted to having listened to the talk inadequately, and a number more had already forgotten the content of the talk, although they remembered their own reactions to it. Crossman's talk did not arouse very much interest, either for or against the talk…About 20% also admitted that they had not listened adequately to this talk, and more had also forgotten its detailed content.[102]

The views of those surveyed varied substantially both in terms of their commitment to listening-in and their understanding of what they had heard. If such views were common then it is difficult for the historian to judge what exactly the 'masses' gained from the wireless other than periodic entertainment.

Another report from Mass-Observation gives a more detailed analysis of listeners' responses to broadcast talks. The author of the report investigated public responses to talks broadcast after the regular 9 o'clock evening bulletin.[103] The report was based on people of all ages and classes living in London with daily check-ups on individual broadcast talks being made for more than a month. It was found that from those approached 35 per cent listened fairly regularly, 42 per cent occasionally, and 22 per cent very occasionally. The report stated that those who listened to radio talks 'fairly regularly' were listening on average four times per week, while those who listened 'occasionally' tuned-in twice a week, compared with those who listened 'very occasionally' only twice a fortnight. The author agreed with official BBC figures that stated 30 per cent of those in possession of a radio listened often to talks. However, he also questioned whether listeners paid sufficient attention fully to understand the subjects of talks. These figures illustrate the limited impact they must have had on a large proportion of the population. Nevertheless, 70 per cent of listeners agreed that talks were 'good or sometimes good', 55 per cent said they could not be improved, and only 10 per cent argued that there were too many talks on the radio in the evening. Even though most listeners did not mind who spoke to them, a minority preferred

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[102] Broadcasts by Ellen Wilkinson and R.H.S. Crossman (public response), July 1940, Cambridge University Library, Mass-Observation File Reports 1937-1972 (microfilm copies); 248, microfiche 1457-50.

[103] According to the politician and broadcaster Oliver Baldwin, prime-time radio was between 8 and 11 o'clock in the evening, despite most people being free to listen between 6 and 10pm. See Oliver Baldwin, 'What's to be done by the New Director-General of the BBC?', 16 June 1938, Cambridge University Library, Stanley Baldwin papers, Add.9735/3/2/211(i).

politicians (particularly Conservatives) such as Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, and Duff Cooper (although this view was probably influenced by the war). Of the reasons for liking speakers, the most common was a speaker's manner or personality. Finally, the author concluded that the 'majority of those listening to the talks on any one night are part of a section of regular listeners who might be described as "talk fans"'.[104]

This, then, might suggest a more exclusive listening public for talks' series compared with other programmes, but despite adopting a cautious approach towards the potential impact of Conservative talks, the audience was considerably larger than those of periodicals and books. If we apply the findings of Mass Observation to the figures on radio license ownership, as outlined above, they suggest that more than 3 million licensees listened to talks at least four times a week. Similarly, if we use Briggs' estimation of 98 per cent of the population having access to radio by 1935, it would indicate that more than 13 million people listened to talks with the same regularity each week.[105] If we accept that a majority of regular listeners were 'talk fans', then at least 6.5 million people took them seriously. It is interesting to compare these estimations with Reith's analysis of 14-15 million listeners in 1930. Reith and his colleagues at the BBC might not have been fully aware of the extent of the illegal use of radios at this time. It is also possible that Reith's elitist views prevented him from looking beyond the audience for talks series and classical music. Those who communicated directly with the BBC in order to give feedback on programming were also likely to have been from the educated classes. All of this, of course, amounts to little more than educated guessing. However, it does demonstrate the enormous differences in size between listening publics and elite reading publics; whereas the first could always be measured in millions, the second never went beyond an audience of thousands in the 1930s.

There is evidence to suggest that political broadcasts played an important role in helping mould public opinion, which is why Conservatives were eager to make use of the medium. Bristol University conducted a survey on the social effects of broadcasting for the BBC in 1939. The survey was carried out in a district of East Bristol. The district was predominantly working class; the poorly paid labourer, casual worker, skilled artisan, but also independent

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[104] Reaction to talks after 9 o'clock bulletin, 8 July 1940: a report from Mass Observation, Cambridge University Library, Mass-Observation File Reports 1937-1972 (Microfilm copies); 256/BBC, mmicrofiche 1457-52.

[105] Comparable census data for England and Wales can be found in David C. Marsh, *The changing social structure of England and Wales 1871-1961* (London, 1998), p. 6. The population of England and Wales was already approaching 40 million by 1931.

owners of small businesses, clerks, typists, and a small number of professional people were all represented. The survey included families, teachers, and over 800 schoolchildren.[106] The most interesting section investigates the potential effect of broadcasting on peoples' political views: 'Many people, who would not go to a meeting to hear a political opponent will listen to what he has to say on the air and afterwards discuss his point of view.'[107] The report claimed that local party organisers agreed with the findings: 'The Unionist organizers for the district noticed a more critical attitude in the public, while a Labour leader pointed out the effects of topical talks and debates upon national matters in stimulating interest and checking extreme opinions. Such national talks were said to be widely discussed the following day in the factory or workshop.'[108] It would be wrong, then, despite the many difficulties encountered when attempting to uncover facts about listening audiences in the 1930s, simply to dismiss the potential impact of political broadcasts. We can say with confidence that a large proportion of the population listened on a fairly regular basis to broadcast talks, but it is impossible to measure their impact on listeners.

Broadcast talks were almost always printed in *The Listener* because no more than 10 per cent of its output could be occupied by non-broadcast material. This guaranteed talks reached another, albeit selective, reading public alongside the much broader listening one. *The Listener* became one of the most respected weekly journals immediately after its launch in 1929.[109] The magazine's first editor, Richard Lambert, considered it to be a 'vehicle for general culture' and was not concerned by its elite readership: 'There need be no despondency about the circulation…although there might be room for a feeling of depression about the size of the intelligent reading public in this country.'[110] We know that political elites listened to broadcasts. Politicians made their friends aware of their broadcasts even if they did not understand why the general public would be willing to listen at certain times of the day. Walter Elliot wrote to Baffy Dugdale in August 1932: 'It's on Parliament The Machine How It Works and what in hell anybody wants to hear about that at 10.15pm in

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[106] Hilda Jennings and Winifred Gill, *Broadcasting in everyday life: a survey of the social effects of the coming of broadcasting* (London, 1939), pp. 8-9.
[107] Ibid., p. 15.
[108] Ibid., p. 16.
[109] Briggs, *The golden age*, p. 260.
[110] Quoted in Briggs, *The golden age*, pp. 266-9. *The Listener* circulated 50,670 copies in 1934, whereas the popular *Radio Times* circulated 2.1 million copies. However, the two publications had different ambitions. See Chaney, 'Audience research and the BBC', p. 266.

August I cannot conceive.'[111] Lord Hailsham listened to his son Quintin's inaugural broadcast in 1934, which he considered to be somewhat of a coup for a young prospective Conservative candidate: 'Quintin had the compliment of being asked to broadcast in the "Whither Britain" series which the British Broadcasting Corporation has been running this year; as the previous speakers were Winston Churchill, Wells, Shaw and Ernest Bevin, it was rather a feather in his cap to be selected. I listened in and I thought he did quite well, although naturally I did not agree with everything he said.'[112] Broadcasting was part of the same Conservative discursive 'world' as periodicals and books, but because of its reach both CCO and Joseph Ball's NPB considered broadcasting to be much more important for practical, electoral politics.

In a private memorandum written for Neville Chamberlain in 1934, Ball explained that the BBC was one of five 'really effective engines for mass propaganda'; the others were the press (national and local), hoardings, cinema, and pamphlets.[113] However, Ball outlined a major problem facing the Conservative party:

> [I]t seems essential that immediate steps should be taken to build up what we do not yet possess, viz: - a team of really effective debaters, each trained in "getting across" one or more important subjects to the enormous audiences who listen in. We are far better equipped than our opponents with speakers of Cabinet rank, but we fall lamentably behind them when we come to the second eleven.[114]

Ball also appreciated the distinction between propaganda for the 'masses' and political education for Conservative supporters. This is why he was happy to leave official party publications, such as *Politics in Review* and *Hints for Speakers*, and leaflets for use at political meetings, in the hands of officials at CCO.[115] In a memorandum from 1938, Ball explained, 'The Central Office has, of course, many interests other than propaganda, and, during recent years, what money has been available has been spent mainly on organisation and on the political education of our own supporters.' Unsurprisingly, he believed the party's

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[111] Walter Elliot to Baffy Dugdale, 25 August 1932, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Walter Elliot papers, Acc.12267/12.
[112] Douglas Hogg to Miss Cheatham, 1 March 1934, Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre, Lord Hailsham papers, HAIL 1/3/1.
[113] 'Some Notes And Suggestions About Propaganda'; memorandum by Joseph Ball, sent to Neville Chamberlain, 14 April 1934, p. 2, Birmingham University Library, Neville Chamberlain papers, NC8/21/9.
[114] Ibid., p. 3.
[115] Ibid., p. 6.

priority should be the NPB: 'I am strongly of opinion that propaganda should come first.'[116] By 1938 Ball believed the BBC to be heavily biased towards the left and he now regarded the medium as 'one of our greatest handicaps'.[117] However, many vocal right-wingers such as J.D.F. Green continued to be promoted under Reith's stewardship. The problem for the Conservative party was that men like Green proved scrupulous adherents to neutrality and the doctrine of avoiding controversy[118]

This distinguishes broadcasting from Conservative discourse in periodicals and books. Broadcasts were considered potential instruments of propaganda, which meant they were subject to far greater scrutiny. CCO sanctioned speakers who could be relied on to follow the party line, while the BBC carefully vetted scripts in advance. Conservatives were sometimes invited to broadcast as 'independent experts', but most had to be asked by CCO.[119] Periodicals and books were subject to fewer political constraints than broadcast scripts, but scripts still had to be written by Conservatives who were sympathetic to the subject matter. There is no reason to think that the way they chose to construct their scripts and public message was not representative of their own political views, despite the interest of CCO. Conservatives were not always willing to be manipulated by CCO and the party leadership. Those who held ministerial office or hoped to do so in the future were more likely to conform, but political parties could not guarantee subordination. Many MPs still prided themselves on their ability to intervene in public debate in the 1930s and they were probably more independent due to the existence of a National Government with a huge majority.[120] While transcripts of ministers' broadcasts should probably be read with caution, some backbenchers who offered more independent views were also heard on the radio. L.S.

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[116] 'To The Prime Minister'; a memorandum by Joseph Ball for Neville Chamberlain, June 1938, p. 3, Birmingham University Library, Neville Chamberlain papers, NC8/21/8.
[117] Ibid., p. 5.
[118] J.D.F. Green is discussed at length in Chapter Five. For Green's correspondence with Dorothy Crisp about her attempts to broadcast in the 1940s, see Dorothy Crisp, *A Life for England*, pp. 167-9.
[119] Winston Churchill suffered because of these rules and regulations, see Winston Churchill to J.H. Whitley, 8 August 1931, Caversham, BBC Written Archives Centre, R34/429. But also R34/563/2 (correspondence between Churchill, David Lloyd George, Austen Chamberlain, and Whitley, 25 August-7 September 1933).
[120] On the independence of MPs at this time, a good example is comments in the unpublished memoirs of the Conservative MP John de Vere Loder (who succeeded to the peerage as Baron Wakehurst in April 1936). See John Loder Memoir Typescript, Chapter 15: MP for Lewes 1931-36, p. 10, London, House of Lords Record Office, Parliamentary Archives, WAK/2/5. Loder writes: 'It was never held in my day that any outside body [and here he was referring to his constituency organisation] could impose its will on a Member of Parliament's freedom to come to his own decisions.'

Amery, Winston Churchill, Harold Macmillan, and Eustace Percy are good examples of independent Conservative thought being broadcast. Percy certainly used his broadcasting opportunities to by-pass party constraints on the expression of heterodox opinion about democracy, the constitution, the civil service, and the economy.[121]

Conservatives were thus engaged in two forms of public discourse in the 1930s. The first, as described above, related to the political education of fellow Conservatives and other educated elites. The second, of which broadcasting was a prime example, represented an attempt to influence a much larger proportion of the population. Broadcasting reached a mass public, but the BBC's Reithian ideals and *The Listener's* role in memorialising ideas in print, ensured that it was still a vital part of the elite world of Conservative public discourse and debate, rather than part of the more sloganising world of day-to-day party propaganda and mass journalism. The different forms of public discourse discussed here do not amount to the sum total of Conservative argument, nor does this thesis claim to represent all the reading material available to Conservative publics. Rather, it documents the spheres that were most important for the public discussion of Conservative ideas. In doing so, it moves between ideas that were 'beyond the pale' and the myriad languages of constitutional Conservatism which sought to demonstrate the continued vitality of both regular government and traditional party politics.[122]

[121] Lord Eustace Percy is discussed at length in Chapter Six.
[122] The phrase was used by Nicholas Mosley, the son of the British Union of Fascists' leader, Oswald Mosley, for the title of his book on his father. See Nicholas Mosley, *Beyond the pale: Sir Oswald Mosley and family, 1933-1980* (London, 1983).

Chapter Two

Whig Lessons, Conservative Answers: The Literary Adventures of J.A.R. Marriott

This chapter reconstructs J.A.R. Marriott's role as one of the most prolific literary Conservatives of the 1930s, comparing his 'Whig interpretation of history' with the ideas of the Conservative historian, Arthur Bryant, and the Liberal political theorist, Ernest Barker.[1] Like Bryant, Marriott claimed to write for the 'general reader', but this is disputable.[2] Marriott's readers had more in common with those of the elite periodical press than with the wider reading public.[3] Marriott still identified the periodical press as one of the most important mediums for influencing politics in the 1930s. As a result, he devoted much of his time to writing detailed articles for prominent monthly reviews. Historians of interwar politics have neglected these as they have failed to utilise Marriott's important collection of private papers.[4] With the exception of Lawrence Goldman's work on Marriott's role as an Oxford University extension lecturer, he has generally been written-off as nothing more than a 'literary' historian who failed to engage with anything other than 'surface events'.[5] This chapter aims to redress the balance.

Marriott was an independent Conservative who used his skills as a historian to bolster the forces of constitutionalism and parliamentary vigilance in Britain. In the 1930s he was critical of the executive because he believed it was using its powers to usurp English traditions of parliamentary government. However, Marriott was no Baldwinite apologist and he often highlighted Baldwin's apparent indifference to constitutional dangers. As an expert

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[1] This draws on Julia Stapleton, *Sir Arthur Bryant and national history in twentieth-century Britain* (Lanham, 2005), pp. 91-4.

[2] For a discussion of Bryant's audiences see Reba N. Soffer, 'Political ideas and audiences: the case of Arthur Bryant and the *Illustrated London News*, 1936-1945', *Parliamentary History*, 27 (2008), pp. 155-67.

[3] Marriott did occasionally write for large audiences. See J.A.R. Marriott, 'Twenty-five years of home and imperial politics', *Illustrated London News*, silver jubilee record number, King George V and Queen Mary 1910-1935 (special collectors edition, subscription only, on sale throughout April 1935), pp. 22-8. Bryant contributed to the same issue.

[4] For an exception, see Stuart Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative party. The crisis of 1929-1931* (London, 1988), p. 246. Ball's principal interests lie elsewhere, which is why even he did not make much use of Marriott's papers.

[5] John W. Osborne, 'The endurance of "literary" history in Great Britain: Charles Oman, G.M. Trevelyan, and the genteel tradition', *Clio*, 2 (October 1972), pp. 12-13. See also, Lawrence Goldman, *Dons and workers. Oxford and adult education since 1850* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 76-7.

on the British constitution, he saw himself as an important influence on the National Government, warning its backbench MPs of the potential pitfalls of a large majority in the House of Commons. Marriott's ideas were also carefully structured to dismiss interwar extremist arguments in favour of revolutionising the British system of government. However, these arguments contrasted with his favourable impression of Mussolini. Marriott admired the Fascist regime's imperialism and nationalism, but distrusted its syndicalist roots. Marriott's sympathy for Fascist Italy influenced his approach to foreign policy and his arguments added weight to the National Government's policy of appeasement. Like many Conservatives he considered the Treaty of Versailles responsible for the rise of dictatorships in continental Europe. As a Victorian Conservative, Marriott rejected claims for self-government in India because he believed the English imperial mission to be incomplete. Marriott's private papers confirm that he was consulted by leading figures of the day, including National Conservative and Liberal cabinet ministers, backbench MPs, influential publicists, and Liberal lawyers. At the same time, Marriott's influence extended beyond Westminster: his articles for the periodical press, his monographs, and his letters to *The Times* reached a larger 'educated' reading public, which was interested in history and politics.

Whig History for the 'Modern Age'

In the early 1930s John Marriott was already in his seventies. He was an honorary Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford, an Oxford University extension lecturer, a well-known historian, a prolific writer (or a 'publicist' as he regarded himself), a former Member of Parliament, a serial letter writer to *The Times*, a regular book reviewer for the *Sunday Times*, an occasional contributor of political articles to the national press, and a regular contributor to the periodical press. At the same time, he was very much in demand as a public speaker.[6] However, parliamentary politics had been his main interest since the First World War following his election to the House of Commons in 1917. As a former Oxford don, Marriott should have been well-suited to his constituency of Oxford City, but he was defeated at the 1922 general election by the maverick Liberal candidate, Frank Gray. Gray saw in Marriott

[6] Goldman, *Dons and workers*, pp. 76-7. See also, J. Marriott, *Memories of four score years. The autobiography of the late Sir John Marriott* (London, 1946), pp. 91-101.

'the weakest possible opponent', but he was also careful to qualify his judgement: '[D]o not let me be misunderstood on this point. Sir John Marriott has ability greater than the average in Parliament, and is versed in more subjects than most M.P.s, but as a candidate he had the fatal defect that he had not the slightest knowledge of or indeed human sympathy with the masses for whom he proposed to legislate.'[7] Marriott won York in 1923, but lost the seat in 1929, the end of his troubled parliamentary career.

Little has been written about Marriott's contribution to Conservative politics during these years; however, the same cannot be said of his work as a historian. John Osborne locates Marriott's historical work within a linear tradition that was largely unaffected by the controversy surrounding the publication of J.A. Froude's *History of England from 1529 to the Death of Elizabeth* in the 1870s, seen by some as the death knell of 'literary' history. Osborne compares Marriott's style to that of two of his contemporaries, Charles Oman and G.M. Trevelyan. He reminds us that their narrative approach remained popular with the educated public until the 1950s. Marriott's *England Since Waterloo, 1815-1901* (1913) had run to eleven editions by 1936.[8] But there was much more to Marriott's literary work. True, books such as *Modern England, 1885-1932* (1934) rarely delved beneath 'surface events' and offered virtually no serious analysis, which explains Osborne's categorisation of his work, but such works made up only part of his output. Others had direct political messages. This is reflected in the way Marriott viewed himself both in the 1930s and in his autobiography (published posthumously in 1946). He often termed himself a 'publicist' rather than a historian because many of his books and nearly all of his articles for the periodical press were written with regard to current affairs. As Goldman observes Marriott's 'approach was not bound by the lives of great men'; he paid 'attention to the interconnection of events and movements'; and he presented 'complex historical questions for an educated but non-specialist audience'.[9]

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[7] Frank Gray, *The confessions of a candidate* (London, 1925), pp. 73-4. Gray's view should not be blindly accepted. Marriott was a paternalist because he sympathised with women and members of the working classes who wished to increase their educational opportunities. See Vera Brittain, *Testament of youth* (London, 1994 edn.), pp. 60-1; Marriott, *Memories of four score years*, p. 133; and, Goldman, *Dons and workers*, p. 78.

[8] Osborne, 'The endurance of "literary" history', pp. 12-13.

[9] Lawrence Goldman, 'Marriott, Sir John Arthur Ransome (1859–1945)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34887, accessed 15 Jan 2009].

Marriott's politics and his 'Whig interpretation of history' were heavily grounded in the nineteenth century.[10] The story of the gradual accumulation of liberty remained, but it now acted as a warning to those who were contemplating breaking with tradition and adopting continental systems of government. In 1936 Marriott revealed those historians he most admired; he identified Lord Clarendon, Edward Gibbon, Lord Macaulay, and George Grote as 'the four most eminent, if not the four greatest, English historians'.[11] Marriott's judgement was based on the fact that all four men had at some stage sat in Parliament (three held office) and that all employed a partisan approach to writing history.[12] He wrote, 'History will never perform its proper and appropriate function in the training of citizens unless it avails itself of those gifts of skilful and imaginative exposition possessed in full measure by ardent politicians like Lord Clarendon and Lord Macaulay.'[13] Marriot was aware of the dangers of partisanship, but he believed all history to be ultimately political: 'It is as much "politics" as the events recorded in "The Times" of yesterday. History and politics are in truth one; consequently, only a politician can write history.'[14] Marriott argued that politicians like Austen Chamberlain and Winston Churchill were capable of making worthy contributions to the discipline. Of Churchill, Marriott wrote, 'As for his prose style I do not hesitate to rate it, though less pure than Froude's or George M. Trevelyan's, above Gibbon's or Macaulay's. With a vocabulary as copious as Macaulay's he is his equal in vivacity, and in rhythm of his sentences he is both to Macaulay and Gibbon manifestly superior.'[15]

Marriott had publicised his constitutionalist views since 1900, but the challenges of 1929-31 and the rise of political extremism abroad meant that he was keen to deploy constitutional arguments to sustain a 'faltering' political class.[16] To understand Marriott's 'Whig interpretation of history', his thinking, and his consistent political message in the 1930s, we must begin with his *The Crisis of English Liberty. A History of the Stuart Monarchy and the Puritan Revolution* (1930). Although written before the 1931 crisis,

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[10] For a discussion of Liberalism and Whig historiography see Victor Feske, *From Belloc to Churchill. Private scholars, public culture, and the crisis of British liberalism, 1900-1939* (North Carolina, 1996), pp. 1-14.
[11] J.A.R. Marriott, 'History and politics', *Quarterly Review*, 527 (January 1936), p. 34.
[12] Ibid., p. 36.
[13] Ibid., p. 39.
[14] Ibid., p. 40.
[15] Marriott, *Memories of four score years*, p. 84.
[16] Marriot wrote about the constitution in 1900. See J.A.R. Marriott, 'Cabinet government or departmentalism?', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 48 (October 1900), pp. 685-94.

Marriott's view of the Stuart Monarchy represented an attempt to quarry the past for lessons that could be applied to Britain's current political difficulties. These lessons acted as warnings to those who were voicing dissatisfaction with parliamentary democracy. They were to dominate his literary work for the remainder of the decade.[17] As Marriott explained in the preface, the book's only claim to originality was that it was written with 'special reference to problems now insistently confronting us'. These were thought to have been solved in the seventeenth century by struggles for parliamentary sovereignty, but they had now reappeared to 'stir the blood of those who mingle in public affairs'.[18] One reviewer characterised the book as a polemic, not history.[19]

Marriott made no secret of the fact that the book was written for the 'general reader'. He thought that British citizens could 'do their duty to their own generation' only if they were 'familiar with the problems which confronted their forefathers'.[20] However, comparing G.M. Trevelyan's *Blenheim* (1930) with Marriott's latest work, R.W. Macan wrote, 'I am sure of one small point—that I shall not be distressed in yours, as in his, by any such literary concessions to the proletariat…I must say that a glance at your "Table of Contents" makes me think that you take the intelligence and zeal of "the General Reader" at a figure which is a very high compliment to his General-Readership!'[21] For all Marriott's efforts, print-run statistics from Oxford University Press confirm that he was no more successful than the typical Conservative writer, averaging just 2,000 copies per book. Moreover, Marriott's history books, written mainly for university undergraduates, sold better than those that harboured distinct political messages.[22] The fifth edition of Marriott's *English Political*

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[17] Marriott wrote a number of important articles on the constitution and his ideas were largely based on his arguments in his book, J.A.R. Marriott, *The crisis of English liberty. A history of the Stuart monarchy and the puritan revolution* (Oxford, 1930). See J.A.R. Marriott, 'Cabinet government—its future?', *Fortnightly Review*, 131 (March 1932), pp. 311-22; 'Commons control of finance', *Fortnightly Review*, 133 (February 1933), pp. 194-203; 'A champion of the common law. The tercentenary of Sir Edward Coke', *Fortnightly Review*, 136 (September 1934), pp. 321-30; 'The machinery of government', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 121 (February 1937), pp. 182-92.

[18] Marriott, *The crisis of English liberty*, preface.

[19] Roland G. Usher, 'Review of *The crisis of English liberty. A history of the Stuart monarchy and the puritan revolution* by J. A.R. Marriot', *Journal of Modern History*, 3 (June 1931), pp. 289-90.

[20] Marriott, *The crisis of English liberty*, preface.

[21] R.W. Macan to J.A.R. Marriott, 10 October 1930, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Envelope marked 'Letters of Appreciation and Criticism, mostly dated 1939-40'. Reginald Walter Macan (1848-1941) was Master of University College, Oxford (1906-23) and an expert on historical theology.

[22] J.A.R. Marriott, *Modern England 1885-1932. A history of my own times* (London, 1934), pp. vi, 529. Marriott explains here how his bibliography is intended to be of practical use for students.

Institutions: An Introductory Study ran to 5,000 copies in 1938. In addition, Marriott's books were continuously re-issued, unlike those of most literary Conservatives in this period.[23]

But what sparked Marriott's attempt to fuse history with politics? It appears that reading Lord Hewart's *The New Despotism* (1929) led him, 'to rewrite the constitutional history of the seventeenth century'.[24] Hewart was a Liberal MP between 1913 and 1922, and the Lord Chief Justice of England from 1922 (the year he was elevated to the peerage) until 1940. In his book, Hewart argued that the executive arm of the constitution (government) was trying to cajole, coerce, and use the legislative (Parliament) for its own ends. In his view, government wished to by-pass Parliament and the Courts in order to rule supreme.[25] Marriott praised Hewart, declaring that he had 'descended from the forum into the market-place and issued *urbi* if not *orbi* his reflections upon the contemporary situation'. He even compared him to Sir Edward Coke, the great defender of the English Common Law against the Stuart monarchy in the seventeenth century.[26] Marriott's aim was to present historical struggles for parliamentary sovereignty in the seventeenth century as an amplification of Hewart's thesis on the dangers threatening the constitution in the present. Marriott attributed these modern constitutional problems to three sources: 'the exaltation of the "expert" in all spheres of activity; the multiplication of the functions of Government and the consequent expansion of the Public Departments; and, not least, the growing volume of legislation and the increasing preoccupation or heedlessness of the Legislature.'[27] This was paving the way for the transfer of legislation from Westminster to Whitehall, laying the foundations for what he characterised as an autocracy. Worryingly, he argued, unlike 'amateur' politicians, professional civil servants were not accountable to the public because they could remain

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[23] Printing statistics for individual books can be found in Oxford University Press Archives ref. OP275/1584, *English political institutions. An introductory study* (Oxford, 1938), 5,000 copies printed in December 1938; see also Long Book Editorial Files from OUP's London Office, LB6500, *The crisis of English liberty*, 2,000 copies printed 9 October 1930; LB7622, *The makers of modern Italy: Napoleon—Mussolini* (Oxford, 1931), no figures survive for the 1931 edition but a second run of 1,000 copies was printed 3 February 1937; LB6784, *The English in India. A problem of politics* (Oxford, 1932), 2,000 copies printed 14 April 1932; LB6895, *Oxford: its place in national history* (Oxford, 1932), 2,500 copies printed 12 January 1933.

[24] R. Lodge, 'Review of *The Crisis of English Liberty. A History of the Stuart Monarchy and the Puritan Revolution* by J. A.R. Marriot', *English Historical Review*, 47 (April 1932), p. 311.

[25] Lord Hewart of Bury, *The new despotism* (London, 1929), p. 17, quoted in Marriott, *The Crisis of English liberty*, p. 4.

[26] Marriott, *The crisis of English liberty*, pp. 3-4, 461.

[27] Ibid., p. 4.

anonymous.[28] Furthermore, Marriott thought a number of underlying factors were responsible for this shift of power. Britain was now subject to complex 'industrial and social conditions', while her constitution was suffering from both the 'influence of a Civil Service, consciously or unconsciously permeated by the ideas of Fabian Socialism' and the rejection of laisser-faire in favour of government interference in 'all the affairs of life'.[29]

Interestingly, Marriott singled out Baldwin as an apologist for what he termed the 'new order', which was supposedly eroding the constitution. Marriott argued that Baldwin was defending unaccountable forms of executive power, and he rejected his defence of two remaining constitutional safeguards against the potential abuse of powers to make Statutory Rules and Orders: the courts' powers to reject an act of legislation and an MP's right to introduce a private member's bill to call for an annulment.[30] While Marriott considered the second of these to be 'almost wholly illusory' he was even more disturbed by relying on the judiciary rather than Parliament to protect the liberties of the individual. Marriott's main point was the conflict of interest arising from government departments' newfound willingness to make law in addition to administering it. The courts could intervene to reject the application of legislation only if an individual member of the public appealed against it. This, he argued, was insufficient protection because most members of the public were not aware of their rights of appeal and could ill afford the costs of litigation.[31] Marriott's message was a reminder to MPs to remain vigilant in the defence of both the constitution and personal liberty. The story of the battles fought between the Stuart monarchy and lawyers such as Coke was told to remind MPs of parallel cases in their own time; little wonder that critics and reviewers were unenthusiastic about its contribution to Stuart history. Furthermore, Marriott offered no solution to the constitutional problems he identified other than a committee to consider their implications. This fitted his purpose. It seems Marriott was more concerned about keeping the issue alive within political circles.

Marriott wrote about constitutional matters and also about foreign policy and imperial affairs generally. One of the few occasions when he wrote about Conservative politics was in an article on Sir Francis Burdett for *Cornhill Magazine* in August 1931. Marriott identified Burdett, like Coke, as a model for his time, arguing that he was Conservative, despite his

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[28] Marriott, *The crisis of English liberty*, p. 5.
[29] Ibid., p. 11.
[30] Ibid., p. 12.
[31] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

radical connections and sympathy for the French Revolution, because he was a defender of personal and political liberty, a champion of the oppressed and the suffering.[32] Marriott identified Burdett as the 'lineal ancestor of Disraeli and the Fourth Party'.[33] He wrote,

> Both Disraeli and Burdett regarded the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 as a Whig imposture; both men mistrusted the "Venetian oligarchy" which that Revolution had installed in power; both detested the "new men" and "boroughmongers" who had usurped the power of the Crown, and yet refused to admit the people to a fair share in the government of the country; both believed in a national alliance between the monarchy and an enfranchised democracy; both were zealous in promoting the cause of parliamentary reform; both were opposed to the exclusion of persons from the rights and duties of citizenship by reason of their religious faith; both ardently believed in the compatibility of true Toryism and genuine Democracy.[34]

But Marriott qualified his praise of Burdett, arguing that 'A few Burdetts are a valuable ingredient in any representative assembly,—but only in minute proportions; many Burdetts would constitute a real political danger.'[35] The message was clear: the Conservative party was a natural home for politicians seeking radical reform, but the bulk of traditional Conservatives would always act as a restraining influence on the reforming zeal of the 'Tory Democrats'.[36]

In the aftermath of 1931, Marriott wrote a number of articles glorifying England's response to national crisis. In his article 'The Crown and the crisis' Marriott argued that the King's actions vindicated the role of the Crown in the British constitution. It was the constitution rather than the political parties that saved Britain from doom, although Ramsay MacDonald was to be congratulated for upholding his constitutional duty, unlike Asquith in 1910.[37] After the 1931 general election, Marriott wrote another important article praising 'The answer of demos' to the recent crisis. Marriott argued that the election was more than just a vindication of democracy: 'It is a vindication of that peculiar type of Democracy—*Parliamentary*, as opposed to *Direct* Democracy—which we English folk were the first to evolve.'[38] Even more important, Marriott concluded, was the response given by poorer

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[32] J.A.R. Marriott, 'The father of Tory democracy', *Cornhill Magazine*, 71 (August 1931), p. 152, reviewing M.W. Patterson, *Sir Francis Burdett and his times* (Two Volumes; London, 1931).
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., pp. 150-1.
[35] Ibid., p. 152.
[36] Ibid.
[37] J.A.R. Marriott, 'The Crown and the crisis', *Fortnightly Review*, 130 (November 1931), pp. 586-9.
[38] J.A.R. Marriott, 'The answer of demos', *Fortnightly Review*, 130 (December 1931), p. 681.

members of the electorate who showed their 'patriotism and good sense'. This, he said, was particularly surprising under the circumstances:

> [T]here was at least a hope that the return of the Socialists would have brought some immediate mitigation of the sacrifices now accepted by all. Quite clearly and definitely, then, the mass of the electors refused a bribe. They showed themselves to be (in a fine phrase of Sir Robert Horne's) "not mercenaries, but citizens"'. Furthermore, the outcome gave 'fresh hope and encouragement to those [like himself] who have consistently refused to despair of Democracy.[39]

Marriott believed that the general population was won over by reasoned argument, not just patriotism; the people recognised the potential long-term economic danger of inflation (as witnessed in Germany) and they rejected attempts by the TUC to pressurise the Labour government into accepting its demands.[40] But Marriott was unsure of whether the election result would strengthen the British system of government. He warned the National Government that it must act responsibly because no alternative government existed in Parliament due to the official opposition being in such a minority.[41] Despite Marriott's suspicions of Baldwin, we know that the Conservative leader shared Marriott's anxieties. Baldwin was careful to establish the government's 'national' credentials by allowing the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, to reconstruct the government on his own terms.[42]

Marriott did not, indeed, idealise the National Government. Although he was generally supportive of both it and the Conservative party leadership, he regarded his role as that of critical friend rather than loyal apologist. He constantly warned political elites of potential constitutional, financial, and political abuses, and he urged responsible conduct by all MPs. In March 1932 he was critical of the cabinet's decision to adopt an 'agreement to differ' on the Import Duties Bill.[43] For Marriott, this struck at the heart of one of the most sacred aspects of the Victorian constitution, the principle of collective cabinet responsibility, and he could barely hide his distress: 'Mr. Baldwin's answer to my questions would, I doubt not, be "*solvitur ambulando*": pedants propounded logical dilemmas; it is the business of statesman

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[39] Marriott, 'The answer of demos', p. 682.
[40] Ibid., pp. 683-7.
[41] Ibid., pp. 690-1.
[42] Baldwin only objected to a few of MacDonald's suggestions, which meant non-Conservatives were over-represented at cabinet level based on their share of parliamentary seats. See Philip Williamson, *National crisis and National Government. British politics, the economy and empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 485-6.
[43] See David J. Wrench, ''The needs of the time: the National Government and the 'agreement to differ', 1932', *Parliamentary History*, 23 (2004), pp. 249-64.

to carry on, as best they can, the business of the State. So be it. Englishmen, impatient of theory and disdainful of logic, will wait and see how the thing works. I sincerely hope it will work well.'[44] Marriott was equally critical of L.S. Amery's plans for limiting the cabinet to five members without departmental responsibilities—a 'super-cabinet' like that adopted by the government during the First World War, which was also being advocated by fascists.[45] Marriott argued that Amery was doing the country a great service by raising the issue, but he concluded that it would not improve the British system of government. The introduction of a cabinet secretary, an agenda, and official minutes meant that the cabinet system had already been made more efficient.[46] Furthermore, there was evidence to show that a lack of departmental experts within the War Cabinet had led to increased friction amongst its members resulting in inefficient decision-making.[47]

Financial issues also concerned Marriott. He condemned the National Government's granting of high interest rates to bankers engaged in the War Loan conversion scheme as an extravagance during times of financial hardship.[48] An article on the House of Commons' control of finance followed in February 1933, urging the government to address a most unfashionable subject, the proper regulation of government spending, which he thought would lead to an overall reduction in expenditure.[49] Marriott even warned the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain, not to take credit for 'cheap money' in December 1934: 'Cheap money is…an indication not of prosperity but of industrial depression.'[50] He followed this with another letter to *The Times* in response to the Conservative MP Waldron Smithers who had repeated Chamberlain's claims. Marriott labelled his words as 'partisanship' and warned him as well as other Conservative candidates at the next election, not to exaggerate the National Government's economic record.[51] Marriott's natural sympathies were for individual initiative, private enterprise, low taxation, and low levels of

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[44] Marriott, 'Cabinet government—its future?', pp. 318-22.
[45] See L.S. Amery, *The forward view* (London, 1935), pp. 441-58; and on the BUF's plans, see Gary Love, '"What's the big idea?": Oswald Mosley, the British Union of Fascists and generic fascism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42 (July 2007), pp. 450-1.
[46] Marriott, 'The machinery of government', pp. 188-9.
[47] True to Marriott's defensive nature regarding the constitution, he suggested that the issue be studied by a parliamentary committee. See his letter to *The Times*, 16 July 1936. For his discussion of the War cabinet, see Marriott, 'The machinery of government', p. 190.
[48] Letter to *The Times*, 11 July 1932.
[49] Marriott, 'Commons control of finance', p. 203.
[50] Letter to *The Times*, 24 December 1934.
[51] Letter to *The Times*, 1 January 1935.

public spending, but it seems he adapted his views on Free Trade in line with the development of Conservative politics.[52] He supported the introduction of an emergency tariff on manufactured goods, but insisted that no artificial mechanisms be introduced to stabilise the pound because only 'the natural operation of economic forces' could 'guarantee its permanent stability'.[53]

Marriott's writings on domestic politics reveal that his sympathies were directed towards the Crown, the constitution, and curiously the people. Party politics were never a key feature in the 1930s. This was partly because he was no longer a Conservative MP or subject to the party whip, but it also owed much to his intellectual interests, the nature of the literary spaces in which he published, and the fact that his arguments happened to suit the aims of a Conservative party subsumed within a National Government. When Marriott chose to intervene more directly in party politics he did so usually through letters to *The Times*, but his comments never amounted to more than warnings against the likely excesses of a large Conservative majority in the Commons. Marriott was a self-consciously independent Conservative intellectual who sought to keep Conservative back-benchers and their coalition partners on their mettle to defend principles of parliamentary sovereignty and constitutional government. In this respect, Marriott offered critical support for Baldwin and his ministers and stressed how Conservatives could retain a distinct identity within National politics. Marriott's influential voice acted as an early warning system for the maintenance of Baldwin's centrist coalition of Conservative-Liberal support in elite political circles.

Continental Dictatorships and Foreign Policy

Marriott's anti-socialist, imperialist beliefs resulted in sympathy for Mussolini: 'His followers were bidden not to look for *panem et circenses*—the dole and the cinema. He preached the gospel of work, discipline, sacrifice.'[54] In a second edition of *The Makers of Modern Italy* (1931), Marriott gave an account of the rise of Fascism and praised Mussolini's successful record on domestic policy. However, although Marriott argued that it was too

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[52] See Marriott, *Memories of four score years*, pp. 134-5. Also, J.A.R. Marriott, 'Adam Smith and some problems of to-day', *Fortnightly Review*, 82 (1904), pp. 969-81.
[53] Marriott, 'The answer of demos', p. 691.
[54] Marriott, *The Makers of modern Italy*, p. 198.

early to judge the Italian Fascist 'experiment', he wondered if too high a price had been paid for rapid improvements to Italian society:

> [H]ave not all these advantages been attained at the price of that which is more precious than rubies, the enjoyment of liberty, personal and political? The answer to that question depends on the definition of "liberty". "Liberty", said Mussolini, echoing Mazzini, "is not a right but a duty." Parliamentary democracy—and all that the phrase implies to an Englishman—has unquestionably been superseded by a dictatorship: the press is muzzled; Parliament has been reduced to the position of a debating society, without the power to legislate, and has no control whatever over the Executive; the new electoral methods seem (at any rate to an Englishman, so far as we can comprehend them) a mere travesty of representative government. Despite many elaborative devices, all real power is concentrated in the Fascist Grand Council and its President.[55]

Marriott warmed to the imperialist-nationalist sentiment of the Fascist regime, but he was extremely suspicious of its syndicalist roots. As a result, he seized upon Winston Churchill's comments in his famous Romanes Lecture at Oxford in 1930. Marriott wrote that Churchill's mind 'is moving in the same direction as Signor Mussolini's. They are both, consciously or unconsciously, inspired by Syndicalist doctrine'.[56] Marriott's fear of syndicalism and labour unrest had deepened after the 1926 General Strike. In his words, it 'revealed clearly enough that my temper and outlook were essentially Conservative'.[57] However, despite these fears Marriott refused to engage critically with the philosophy of fascism. Instead, he encouraged his readers to examine Britain's own historical record, notably the years of Tudor dictatorship, which he argued represented 'an indispensable prelude to a period of constitutional advance'.[58] Marriott refused to accept that there was any conflict between his endorsement of constitutional values at home and his condoning of Italian Fascism. He chose to interpret this within the context of his own reading of Tudor and Stuart England. Although he refused to draw direct parallels between the two nations, Marriott hoped for a similar transition from Italy's 'modernizing' dictatorship to some form of parliamentary democracy. In his *Dictatorship and Democracy*, Marriott asked, 'Will repression, having served its

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[55] Marriott, *The Makers of modern Italy*, p. 204.
[56] Ibid., p. 205. For a reprint of the Romanes Lecture of 19 June 1930, see Winston S. Churchill, *Thoughts and adventures* (London, 1932), pp. 229-44.
[57] Marriott, *Memories of four score years*, p. 139. On Marriott's attitude towards organised labour, see Goldman, *Dons and workers*, p. 78.
[58] Marriott, *The Makers of modern Italy*, p. 206.

disciplinary purpose, prepare the way for the enjoyment of a larger liberty? Will the Italian Dictatorship, like that of the English Tudors, prove itself politically educative?'[59]

Like Churchill, Marriott lamented the loss of national self-confidence in British institutions at the end of the 'long nineteenth century'. He remembered how 'the balanced Constitution of England appeared to mankind to be the quintessence of political wisdom'.[60] But the rise of dictatorships in Europe served only to confirm his belief in a Whig view of the national past. As Marriott explained, 'admiration…is one thing: imitation is another' and 'there is no reason why the failure of the copyists should arouse among ourselves dissatisfaction with the original'.[61] It was this attitude, combined with his Christian values and high regard for human life, which led to his support for appeasement. Marriott always stressed that the British should not look down upon their neighbours simply because they could not sustain parliamentary government and democracy. As he argued, 'Forms of government are to be judged not absolutely, according to some preconceived standard of excellence, but relatively to circumstances.'[62] These arguments were the by-products of a 'Whig interpretation of history', which had done much to propagate constitutional and democratic values at home. Marriott blamed the Treaty of Versailles for the rise of ultra-nationalism in interwar Europe, and his memories of the First World War haunted him afresh, but he was aware of the ugliness of dictatorship and of the Nazi regime.[63]

Marriott's views on foreign policy were expressed in a steady flow of articles defending negotiations with Mussolini during the Abyssinian crisis. In his diary, he also acknowledged how he hoped his article *England and Italy* would 'do something to appease bitterness on both sides'.[64] This was certainly wishful thinking, but perhaps he was influenced by a personal letter from Mussolini thanking him for *The Makers of Modern Italy* in 1931.[65] Marriott even wrote a letter of support to the recently displaced Foreign Secretary, Samuel

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[59] J.A.R. Marriott, *Dictatorship and democracy* (Oxford, 1935), p. 192.
[60] Ibid., p. 219.
[61] Ibid., pp. 218-9.
[62] Ibid., 218.
[63] See J.A.R. Marriott to Mr Kenyon, 27 March 1940, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Unsorted letters, envelope marked 'Letters Misc. 1910-45, chiefly political'.
[64] Marriott diary, 1 August 1935, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Box marked 'Marriott Notebooks', Diary (loose leaf), mainly 1933-37. See J.A.R. Marriott, 'England and Italy', *Fortnightly Review*, 138 (August 1935), pp. 194-202.
[65] R.W. Macan to J.A.R. Marriott, 24 January 1932, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Envelope marked 'Letters of Appreciation and Criticism, mostly dated 1939-40'. Macan mentioned that Mussolini had written to Marriott.

Hoare, in 1935 declaring that his 'policy will justify itself'.[66] However, it must be said that although Marriott's articles and books added weight to pro-appeasement arguments, they did not cloud his views on domestic politics. R.W. Macan, reading the proofs of Marriott's *The Makers of Modern Italy*, wrote, 'I am thinking of the doctrinaire Liberals and Socialists, of both peoples—and it has come upon me, with fresh force, that the essence, or part of the essence of "Conservative politics" is just, not to be "doctrinaire", but to be "evolutionary"—I need not develop the point—for it must be the ABC of your own historical conscience.'[67] Marriott's literary work resonated in academic and political circles, and his message that the Conservative party was the natural defender of the constitution, evolved over centuries, remained clear in the minds of his contemporaries.[68]

Marriott's Influence on Historiography and Political Culture

In her recent work on the Conservative historian, Arthur Bryant, Julia Stapleton compares Bryant's responses to the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 with the views of the Liberal intellectual, Ernest Barker. She reveals how Bryant's and Barker's interpretations of 1688 represented a key area of disagreement, which ultimately located both scholars in interwar Conservative or Liberal politics respectively.[69] Barker rejected Bryant's claim that the negative social consequences of the industrial revolution and the 'unleashing of the aristocracy' after 1688 had undermined the Bill of Rights Act of 1689. Barker argued that the price for political liberty was worth paying, and he suggested Bryant's arguments could in fact be used to defend the extremist politics of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.[70] Stapleton rightly draws our attention to the importance of these differences: 'Barker's wariness of the state was firmly rooted in the securities against the misuse of power which he believed was enshrined in the 1689 constitutional settlement. By contrast, Bryant placed great faith in the

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[66] Marriott diary, 16 December 1935, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Box marked 'Marriott Notebooks', Diary (loose leaf), mainly 1933-37.
[67] R.W. Macan to J.A.R. Marriott, 4 December 1931, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Envelope marked 'Letters of Appreciation and Criticism, mostly dated 1939-40'.
[68] Marriott's insistence on the continuation of a 'Whig interpretation of history' also led him to express a renewed confidence in the 'civilising' mission of empire. Marriott urged the British public to defend the country's 'exemplary' record in India. See Marriott, *English in India*, pp. 302-4.
[69] Stapleton, *Sir Arthur Bryant*, pp. 92-3.
[70] Ibid., p. 92.

capacity of a benevolent ruling class—overseen by monarchy—to prevent so-called injustice.'[71]

Marriott's Whig view of 1688 and its consequences edged him closer to the thinking of Liberal conservatives like Barker. It was perhaps no coincidence that both Marriott and Barker wrote regularly for the *Fortnightly Review*, which targeted a broad liberal readership. It has been claimed that religion was a key stumbling block to potential 'Liberal-Conservative agreement against the rising tide of "progressivism"' in the 1930s.[72] While Nonconformity may have been a problem for some Conservatives, it was not for Marriott because he never made religion a key feature of his work, despite his commitment to private worship and the Anglican Church.[73] Marriott said that he had never had much contact with Nonconformists, 'from no lack of sympathy or appreciation of their many sterling qualities but simply through circumstances'. He was tolerant of the religious beliefs of his academic friends, especially R.F. Horton:

> To Horton's own views, ecclesiastical and still more strongly political, I was definitely opposed. His Nonconformity and his Radicalism greatly mellowed, indeed, in old age, and towards the end, while deeply lamenting the virtual disappearance of the Liberal Party, he found, I think, in Mr. Stanley (Earl) Baldwin the nearest approach among modern statesmen to the idol he had worshipped in his political adolescence—Mr. Gladstone.[74]

Before embarking upon a career as a historian Marriott contemplated training for the Anglican priesthood, but he recognised the importance of religious toleration in the 1930s.[75] Marriott was representative of a form of Conservatism that wanted to meet constitutional and economic Liberals half-way to ensure the survival of Britain's established economic and political order at a time when it was being challenged by statist and unconstitutional ideas from both left and right. Like Barker, Marriott put his faith in the constitutional settlement, but like Bryant and other Conservatives he relied on MPs and the Crown to safeguard the unwritten principles of the constitution on behalf of 'the people'. However, Marriott accepted democracy and he did not fear modern political and social change. He rejected the idea that the nineteenth century had undermined the strength of the English national

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[71] Stapleton, *Sir Arthur Bryant*, p. 93.
[72] Ibid., p. 94.
[73] For Marriott's religious views, see Marriott, *Memories of four score years*, pp. 43-52.
[74] Ibid., p. 43.
[75] Ibid., p. 52.

character.[76] 'As in 1914, as in 1926, so again in 1931-2', he said, 'Britons proved that the national fibre is still sound, that in real stamina, moral or physical, there has in fact been no decay.'[77]

Marriott's orthodox economic liberalism reflected an important bridge between the Conservative party and National Liberals in the 1930s, but also we should not forget that his Whig view of 1688 was published in the context of serious debates about the 'professionalization' of history in this period. In *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931), Herbert Butterfield warned famously against studying the past for contemporary purposes and it is likely that Marriott was one of his targets.[78] After all, Marriott's *The Crisis of English Liberty* was as close to a perfect example of a Conservative 'Whig interpretation of history' as one could get; and, more important, it was published just one year before Butterfield's work. Most academics anticipated or echoed Butterfield's concerns in their reviews of Marriott's work. Denis William Brogan, a lecturer in politics at the London School of Economics, seized upon Marriott's Whig interpretation of the seventeenth century in his review of *The Crisis of English Liberty*. Brogan was critical of Marriott's Whig interpretation, but he was also disturbed by Marriott's claims that Britain was dangerously close to returning to a pre-1688 system of government.[79] He was particularly critical of Marriott's inability to look beyond the idea that the legal and parliamentary response to the crisis of 1688 was a purely moral one, disregarding the idea that other personal and professional motives might have played a part in Britain's constitutional 'march of progress'. Brogan was for a more dialectical account of history, which Butterfield would have no doubt appreciated.[80] Another eminent academic, Richard Lodge, was even more scathing of Marriott's work, arguing 'the whole book from 1660 requires careful revision'.[81] However, one senses that Marriott would not have been overly concerned by the responses of professional historians. For all of Marriott's admiration of academic history, politics took

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[76] For a description of Bryant's view of the English national character, see Peter Mandler, 'The consciousness of modernity? Liberalism and the English "national character", 1870-1940', in Bernhard Rieger and Martin Daunton (eds), *Meanings of modernity: Britain from the late-Victorian era to World War Two* (Oxford, 2001), p. 136; and, *The English national character. The history of an idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven and London, 2006), p. 164.
[77] Marriott, *Modern England, 1885-1932*, p. 11.
[78] Stefan Collini, 'Believing in history: Herbert Butterfield, Christian and Whig', in Stefan Collini, *Common Reading. Critics, Historians, Publics* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 142-3.
[79] D.W. Brogan, 'English liberties', *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 Jan., 1931, p. 50.
[80] Collini, 'Believing in history', p. 141.
[81] Lodge, 'Review of *The crisis of English liberty*', p. 314.

centre stage in the twilight of his career. Instead of altering his methodology to suit an emerging historiographical orthodoxy, Marriott justified his 'Whig interpretation of history' on the grounds that it could provide the answers to contemporary constitutional dangers.

Marriott's potential influence can be measured only by documenting the reception of his ideas in political circles. The task has been made more difficult because Marriott crossed-out much of his surviving political correspondence in order to provide paper for writing manuscripts. What other material was submitted to publishers and not returned, or simply thrown away is impossible to tell. Nevertheless, a number of important letters and diary entries survive, while others can be rescued from their more recent literary homes. The material gives us a strong indication of Marriott's academic and political connections in the 1930s.

The fact that Marriott was an MP in the 1920s gave him greater credibility than other Conservative intellectuals. His writings were undoubtedly popular, as a systematic analysis of the periodical press reveals. Alongside another Conservative historian, F.J.C. Hearnshaw, Marriott was the most prolific Conservative contributor throughout the 1930s. No author would have been given so much intellectual space if he was of no interest to readers. The editor of the *Fortnightly Review* certainly believed Marriott's work appealed to old parliamentarians: 'I am sorry to have imposed such a hard task on you, but let me assure you how much I like the result, I think your article will be read with great interest, especially by those who remain at Westminster who were of Asquith's time.'[82] The fact that *The Times* published so many of his letters demonstrates that Marriott was a man of stature. Furthermore, the political stance of the periodicals where Marriott chose to publish, mainly the *Cornhill Magazine*, *Fortnightly Review*, and *Quarterly Review*, suggest that editors considered his work to be less partisan than that of other Conservative historians, even though he always claimed to be a 'stern and unbending Tory' in the national press.[83] This contrasts with other Conservative historians such as F.J.C. Hearnshaw and Hugh Sellon, who preferred to publish in the *National Review* and *English Review* respectively.

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[82] Editor of the *Fortnightly Review* to J.A.R. Marriott, 11 October 1932, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Sorted Letters 1870-1943. The article in question was probably Marriott, 'Commons Control of Finance', pp. 194-203.

[83] *The Times*, 20 November 1935. Presumably Marriott was trying to compare himself to the historian T.B. Macaulay who used the same words in a hostile review of W.E. Gladstone's book *The state in its relations with the Church* (1838). See Richard Shannon, *Gladstone. Volume one, 1809-1865* (London, 1982), pp. 43-4; and, Boyd Hilton, *A mad, bad, and dangerous people? England 1783-1846* (Oxford, 2006), p. 485.

Marriott's expertise and background meant that he was read by political elites. The popularisation of Hewart's arguments in Marriott's history of the seventeenth century and the arguments Marriott later put forward in articles for the periodical press registered in Conservative, Liberal, and legal circles. Marriott's work, for example, greatly influenced the Conservative backbench MP Harold Balfour who wrote an important series of broadcasts on the British constitution for the BBC in October 1935.[84] Although Balfour did not fully endorse Marriott's suspicions of the political establishment, his talks touched upon nearly all of Marriott's concerns, and during his first two broadcasts he openly acknowledged Marriott's work as important and influential. Marriott's seventeenth century comparison fuelled Balfour's script with examples of British freedoms won through hard fought legal and constitutional developments. Balfour advised his audience, 'I only wish that I could assure you that the fears expressed by men like Lord Hewart and Sir John Marriott are groundless.'[85] Balfour's talks were written with Hitler's 'Night of the Long Knives' fresh in the popular mind. Despite trying to nuance his views of the Nazi regime in hope of improved diplomatic relations with Germany, it was obvious from his broadcasts that such qualification struck at the heart of his view of British justice and his high regard for personal liberty. The aim of Balfour's broadcasts was to shed some light on the British system of government, which he thought the British people were 'in the habit of taking for granted'.[86] The series was originally planned to air the views of Balfour over the course of four weeks and to follow this with three talks on foreign systems of government by Agnes Headlam-Morley (another Oxford historian, cousin of Cuthbert Headlam, and prospective Conservative candidate for his old seat of Barnard Castle in 1936).[87] There would then be five talks by Oswald Mosley, Harry Pollitt, Isaac Foot, Herbert Morrison, and Kenneth Pickthorn. None of these was ever broadcast. They were first postponed due to the general

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[84] The broadcast series was called *The Citizen and his government*. See Harold Balfour, 'The free-born Briton', 'Making the law', 'Putting the law into effect', and 'Responsibility of the elector', in *The Listener*, 2-23 October 1935.

[85] Harold Balfour, 'The citizen and his government. 2. Political liberty. Parliament: the making of laws', broadcast script, 8 October 1935, The Papers of Harold Harington Balfour, 1st Baron Balfour of Inchrye, GBR/0014/BLFR.

[86] Harold Balfour, 'The citizen and his government. 1. The free-born Briton', broadcast script, 1 October 1935, The Papers of Harold Harington Balfour, 1st Baron Balfour of Inchrye, GBR/0014/BLFR.

[87] See Adam Roberts, 'Morley, Agnes Headlam- (1902–1986)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/55358, accessed 19 Jan 2009].

election, and later cancelled. However, we know that both Mosley's and Pollitt's talks were prevented from being aired because the British government asked the BBC to remove them from their schedule due to foreign policy concerns.[88] This was a classic case of the National Government, and the Conservative party, pressurising the BBC into preventing unconstitutional views being aired on radio, although, as Asa Briggs suggests, the BBC did not always comply so easily to the will of government.[89]

Marriott's influence on Balfour indicates how academic works could influence 1930s Conservative culture. Both Marriott and Balfour attempted to underpin their constitutional arguments with historical examples in order to convince the public that the parliamentary system was preferable to foreign-style dictatorship. But their level of detail suggests that they were primarily addressing the highly-educated elite. Certainly they did have influence with such people. Not only did the literary Conservative and Minister of War, Duff Cooper, express interest in Marriott's work, but Lord Selborne praised his *Oxford and its Place in National History* (1933). Even more remarkable was a letter from Clive Wigram, Private Secretary to the King, which stated that George V had read Marriott's book *Queen Victoria and Her Ministers* (1933) 'with much interest'. Marriott noted in his diary that he had not sent the King a copy of his book and that George V had since requested an autographed version.[90] The legal world, which played an important role in parliamentary politics also approved of Marriott's work, especially *The Crisis of English Liberty*. As late as 1944 Humphrey Leggett informed Marriott of a recent encounter with two leading legal experts, the former Liberal MPs, Norman Birkett and William Jowitt, who were then working on the 'war criminals question'.[91] Leggett suggested to the two men that Marriott was well placed to write a letter to *The Times* on the subject of 'Act of State'. According to Leggett, 'Jowitt

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[88] Donald[?] Banks to Stephen Tallents, 24 June 1936, Caversham, BBC Written Archives Centre, R51/83.

[89] For example, Asa Briggs, *The history of broadcasting in the United Kingdom volume II: the golden age of the wireless* (Oxford, 1995 edn.), p. 4.

[90] Marriott diary, 31 December 1933, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Box marked 'Marriott Notebooks', Diary (loose leaf), mainly 1933-37.

[91] Major Sir Edward Humphrey Leggett: Chairman East African Section, London Chamber of Commerce, 1919–30; A Vice-President, Royal Society of Arts, and Chairman, Dominions and Colonies Committee of the Society, 1925–31. Sir Norman Birkett: barrister and judge; Liberal MP 1923-4 and 1929-31 (Nottingham East). Sir William Jowitt: Liberal MP 1922-4 (Hartlepools) & 1929 (Preston); Labour and then National Labour MP 1929-31 (Preston); 1939-45 Labour MP (Ashton-under-Lyne). Although originally a Liberal, Ramsay MacDonald requested Jowitt as attorney general in 1929, which he accepted. Jowitt was sworn in to the Privy Council in 1931 and supported the National Government, retaining his position as attorney general until 1931.

and Birkett jumped at this in the most amazing way, and both said that they hoped I would write you at once, urging you to do it. Jowitt added "It would be rendering a very high public service if Marriott would do this, and you may tell him so from me".' Furthermore, Birkett asked Leggett if he had ever read *The Crisis of English Liberty*. Birkett judged the work to be 'one of the finest books ever written' and argued that 'a man who could write that book is the right man to instruct the British public'.[92]

Marriott's private papers confirm that he was solidly in touch with Conservative politics despite his advancing years. He was valued by CCO as a platform speaker, campaigning for the National Government during the 1931 general election. The Vice Chairman of the Conservative party wrote to Marriott explaining that his former parliamentary status would be an asset during the campaign.[93] Other letters demonstrate that he was consulted by leading political figures of the day. Again, Duff Cooper offered Marriott and his wife the use of his room at the War Office to view the coronation procession of Edward VIII in January 1936, and he looked forward to reading his forthcoming book on Castlereagh.[94] John Simon, the Home Secretary and National Liberal MP, recruited by Marriott as an Oxford extension lecturer earlier in his career, wrote to him in June 1936. Simon shared Marriott's interest in upholding constitutional values in public life because he raised the issue of the Budget Disclosure Enquiry involving the recent malpractices of J.H. Thomas (National Labour MP for Derby and Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs):

> [Y]ou will have been much interested in the proceedings and conclusion of the Budget Disclosure Inquiry—a sad business and indeed a very distressing one as regards the individuals, but at bottom a tremendous proof of the integrity of British public life and a lesson to the world on how to set things right if something goes wrong. The contrast with Stavisky and Teapot Dome makes one feel proud of being an Englishman, but of course we must never tell our French friends or our American cousins that this is what we feel.[95]

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[92] Sir Humphrey Leggett to J.A.R. Marriott, two letters dated 6 & 7 January 1944, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Unsorted letters, envelope marked 'Letters Misc. 1910-45, chiefly political'.

[93] Letter from Vice Chairman of the Conservative party to J.A.R. Marriott, 7 October 1931, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Correspondence survives, crossed-out, on the reverse of his draft manuscript for 'Oxford: its place in national history'.

[94] Duff Cooper to J.A.R. Marriott, 24 January 1936, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Unsorted letters, envelope marked 'Letters Misc. 1910-45, chiefly political'. See J.A.R. Marriott, *Castlereagh. The political life of Robert, Second Marquess of Londonderry* (London, 1936).

[95] John Simon to J.A.R. Marriott, 12 June 1936, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Unsorted letters, envelope marked 'Letters Misc. 1910-45, chiefly political'. For the Stavisky affair, see Brian Jenkins, *France in the era of fascism: essays on the French authoritarian right* (New York, 2005), p. 15. On Teapot Dome, see Barbara Davis, *The Teapot Dome scandal* (London, 2007), p. 15.

Simon's confidence in the superiority of the British constitution and the good conduct of its MPs was in fact backed-up by punitive action taken by the House of Commons. The fact that Simon mentioned the Budget Disclosure to Marriott illustrates that his work and views were well-known in Parliament. Simon saw the result of the Budget Disclosure Inquiry as evidence that honourable members were heeding Marriott's warnings about the safeguarding of the constitution. Similarly, when Marriott wrote to the National Conservative MP, Edward Grigg, to compliment him on his book, *The Faith of an Englishman*, in 1938, Grigg was gracious with his response: 'Thank you very much for your very kind letter regarding my book which has caused me immense pleasure, coming, as it does, from a writer and thinker of your influence and experience.'[96] That Marriott shared similar views to Grigg (a former Lloyd George Liberal) is not surprising because of their mutual interest in liberal values and imperial politics.

In fact, in the final chapter of his autobiography, Marriott draws our attention to his more intimate political contacts, particularly those Conservatives and publicists who often joined him at his home for luncheon in the 1930s. Marriott claimed to be in contact with the venerable Viscount Bridgeman and Austen Chamberlain, but a group of former and serving Conservative MPs furnished him with contemporary parliamentary gossip, namely Nathan Raw, Vivian Henderson, Annesley Somerville, William Collins and Servington Savery. Financiers, soldiers, and publicists such as Arnold Wilson (also a Conservative MP), Wickham Steed, Harold Nicholson, John Coatman, and Owen Rutter (editor of the *Hungarian Quarterly*, where Marriott sometimes published) were also regular visitors.[97] However, Marriott's relationship with Arthur Bryant was more complicated because he did not lecture at the unofficial Conservative training college, Ashridge, which was under Bryant's control in the 1930s.

The Conservative historians F.J.C. Hearnshaw and Hugh Sellon lectured regularly at Ashridge and they often corresponded with Bryant, but there is no record of Marriott ever doing so in his or Bryant's private papers. However, Marriott met Hearnshaw and Sellon for

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The budget disclosure inquiry confirmed revelations that J.H. Thomas had disclosed budget secrets before an official government announcement was made. This led to private financial gain on behalf of Sir A. Butt (Conservative MP for Balham and Tooting). Marriott, *Memories of four score years*, p. 45.

[96] Edward Grigg to J.R. Marriott, 31 July 1938, 1st Lord Altrincham (Sir Edward Grigg) papers, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Film 1005. See also J.R. Marriott to Edward Grigg, 26 July 1938.

[97] Marriott, *Memories of four score years*, pp. 234-9.

luncheon on a number of occasions and corresponded with Hearnshaw during the 1930s.[98] It is surprising that Marriott played no role at Ashridge because he was at the centre of its precursor, the Philip Stott College, in the mid-1920s. Not only did Marriott correspond with the most prominent Conservatives of the day to persuade them to speak at the college, but John Buchan praised his 'amplification of the syllabus' in 1925.[99] Marriott had vast experience lecturing at the Philip Stott College, both as an Oxford University extension lecturer and college tutor. Marriott may have decided against being involved because, given Bryant's more partisan influence at Ashridge, he wanted to maintain the appearance of non-partisanship in his own work; but it is also possible that the two men did not get on. Bryant was also a member of the Oxford University extension delegacy and the two must have known each other. We know that some Conservatives were not predisposed to Marriott's character and political background. Cuthbert Headlam referred to him as a 'second-rate bore' and one of the party's 'old "busters"' in the 1920s.[100] Headlam could not understand Marriott's interest in serving on the Estimates Committee, which he regarded as a waste of time as opposed to providing proper parliamentary scrutiny of government spending.[101] Whatever the reasons behind Marriott's absence from Ashridge, he was able to reach a reading public different to that of Bryant, Hearnshaw, and Sellon. It was much more liberal and it consisted of members and voters of all political parties. This was a significant middle- and upper-class readership, which was needed to support the National Government and Baldwin's centrist Conservative politics in the 1930s.[102]

For all of Marriott's output and influence in the 1930s, we must remember that he derived much from others. His private papers reveal that most of his books and articles drew

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[98] Marriott diary, 12 August 1935 and 16 December 1936, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Box marked 'Marriott Notebooks', Diary (loose leaf), mainly 1933-37. Also, see F.J.C. Hearnshaw to J.A.R. Marriott, 21 November 1940, in Envelope marked 'Letters of Appreciation and Criticism, mostly dated 1939-40'.

[99] For a series of letters from Stanley Baldwin, Austen Chamberlain, Neville Chamberlain, and Eustace Percy to J.A.R. Marriott from the 1920s, see York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Envelope marked '1926 Misc'. Also, John Buchan to J.A.R. Marriott, 26 October 1925, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Envelope marked 'Letters Misc. 1919-37, chiefly 1924-5'.

[100] Stuart Ball (ed.), *Parliament and politics in the age of Baldwin and Macdonald. The Headlam diaries 1923-1935* (London, 1992), p. 57, 12 March 1925, &, p. 63, 20 May 1925.

[101] Ibid., p. 81, 12 March 1925.

[102] It is noticeable, for example, that those who published in the *Fortnightly Review* alongside Marriott included Edward Grigg, Austin Hopkinson, Robert Bernays, Hugh Dalton, and George Orwell to name a few. Therefore, it was a very diverse political and literary space, a space that was listening to all points of view, which could no doubt be influenced and won over.

heavily on newspaper cuttings and other printed documents such as pamphlets; he collected quotations on liberty and fascism by Baldwin, Simon, Birkett, Hearnshaw, Churchill, and Robert Bernays to name a few.[103] But he was also a voracious reader of the work of contemporaries. For example, in 1937 alone Marriott read books by Kenneth Pickthorn, Viscount Snowdon, Lord Snell, Walter Citrine, Arthur Bryant, and Thomas Dugdale. However, it was always Churchill's books that stood out in his mind. He described Churchill's *Great Contemporaries* as 'wholly delightful' and praised his 'wonderful portraits' of all the great men he covered in his book.[104]

In some ways, Marriott had more in common with Churchill than he did with Baldwin. As we know, Marriott was critical of Baldwin complacency in the early 1930s.[105] But it is also clear from entries in Marriott's private diary that Baldwin's handling of the Abdication Crisis impressed him deeply. The episode convinced Marriott to end his scepticism of the Conservative leader:

> SB's retirement at the zenith of his popularity + prestige is surely unique in the history of English statesmanship, the manner of his going has been perfect marred only (as I think) by his "gift" of £600 a year to MPs! I've no doubt his soft heart was touched by some cases of hardship [referring here to Socialist MPs]…but there seems a slightly melo-dramatic touch about a party gift at the tax-payers expense! But this is the only spot on the sun…but what a change in the Estimate the last 9 months have brought. Had he resigned anytime before Dec. 1936 he would have gone down to history to a very mixed reputation, + wd never have been put in the 1st class of P.M's. Now he is ranked to the Walpoles, Peels + Younger Pitt. The Edw. Viii crisis gave him his opportunity + he rose to it superbly. I doubt if there has ever been a P.M…[with]…fewer enemies, tho' there have been many with more…friends + admirers. He stands in sharp contrast to Dizzy + Gladstone.[106]

Furthermore, Marriott drew on Baldwin's anti-fascist speeches as a valuable rhetorical source for his own literary work.[107] As Williamson explains, Baldwin was largely ambivalent towards democracy, but he accepted it as irreversible and he often invoked Whig

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[103] Assorted press cuttings, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Box marked 'ZWD(Y)'. The envelopes of cuttings relate to chapters of certain books and articles over the years and seem to have been continuously updated and reworked using the material.
[104] Marriott diary, 20-31 December 1937, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Box marked 'Marriott Notebooks', Diary (loose leaf), mainly 1933-7.
[105] Marriott, 'Cabinet government—its future?', p. 322.
[106] Marriott diary, 28 May 1937, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Box marked 'Marriott Notebooks', Diary (loose leaf), mainly 1933-7.
[107] Assorted press cuttings, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott Papers, Acc 140. Box marked 'ZWD(Y)'.

interpretations of Britain's *sui generis* past to add weight to his constitutional arguments.[108] Baldwin's inclusive public message allowed a Conservative 'Whig interpretation of history' to thrive in the 1930s and Marriott's publications added weight to Baldwin's constitutional Conservative message. It did not matter if Baldwin's personal views differed from Marriott's because in the end they worked towards the same national goal.

At heart, this chapter demonstrates how strongly the Victorian age continued to grip the minds of literary Conservatives, and how their work could still command an important elite readership throughout the 1930s. Marriott's 'Whig interpretation of history' refused to reject the political and social reforms of the nineteenth century and this provided one way of reaching out to National Liberals and other liberal-Conservative readers. Marriott was an independent Conservative and he warned the National Government against the potential abuse of its powers. He was also a consistent voice against the adoption of fascist ideas at home because he rejected political extremism out of hand. Marriott reinforced continuity in British elite reading circles at a time when radical political change was being implemented abroad and discussed at home. Marriott contributed towards the success of both the Conservative party and the National Government in the 1930s. However, his work also encouraged the party to be politically cautious, arguably helping to cement the party's position on the 'long road to 1945'.

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[108] Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin. Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 204, 254-5.

Chapter Three

Resurrecting Nineteenth Century Politics: The Polemics of F.J.C. Hearnshaw

The polemics of the historian F.J.C. Hearnshaw offer an important insight into the complex attitudes of Conservatives who chose to align themselves to the right of Baldwinite Conservatism in the 1930s. Hearnshaw was an important intellectual Conservative voice who sought to reconcile Nonconformist Liberals and Anglican Conservatives behind a robust anti-socialist politics. Despite holding deep concerns about the advent of universal suffrage, Hearnshaw's ideas were determinedly constitutional and they became more unambiguously pro-democratic as he sought to resist the heresies of totalitarianism; however, no matter how much he tried, he was unable to come to terms with the working classes on social policy. Although recent work has done much to re-establish Hearnshaw as an interwar public intellectual, Hearnshaw's political commentaries in the periodical press have gone unnoticed, despite this being his most influential and productive literary space in the 1930s.[1]

F.J.C. Hearnshaw was born into the 'Wesleyan Methodist cause' in 1869.[2] His father was a prominent Wesleyan minister who was well-known in the Methodist community for his 'evangelical zeal and his administrative efficiency'. Although Hearnshaw originated from Birmingham, he attended the Queen Mary's School of Walsall. Common to all Wesleyan ministers was the practice of regular compulsory relocation; in Hearnshaw's father's case, it was to the Walsall Wesley circuit.[3] Hearnshaw excelled at grammar school, particularly in chemistry, and he remained there for four years until the age of thirteen. Unfortunately, Hearnshaw's education was interrupted when his father was forced to move to Oldham in

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[1] See Reba N. Soffer, *History, historians, and conservatism in Britain and America. From the Great War to Thatcher and Reagan* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 51-85. For an earlier, briefer account of Hearnshaw's importance alongside Arthur Bryant and Keith Feiling, see Reba N. Soffer, 'The long nineteenth century of conservative thought', in George K. Behlmer and Fred M. Leventhal (eds), *Singular continuities. Tradition, nostalgia, and identity in modern British culture* (Stanford, 2000), pp. 143-62.

[2] Hearnshaw's father rejected the claims made by the ostracised Methodist Reform Association and upheld 'Methodist discipline', see F.J.C. Hearnshaw, *Some memories of an elderly man. Recorded mainly for his children and grandchildren* (Hearnshaw Family Archive: Wirral, 2001), pp. 10-21. The memoirs were published privately by the Hearnshaw family after they were rediscovered in 1993 and Soffer did not use this important document in her analysis of Hearnshaw's work.

[3] First endowed by Queen Mary Tudor, the school was able to build its own chapel and its headmaster was a clergyman of the Church of England. After the Endowed Schools act of 1869 the chapel was separated from the school and its religious activities were relaxed; it no longer retained a clergyman of any faith as headmaster. Hearnshaw, *Some memories of an elderly man*, pp. 16-17.

1882. There, Hearnshaw attended the Manchester Grammar School for two more terms before his father fell seriously ill and he had to be withdrawn.[4] It was decided that the young Hearnshaw would become an apprentice chemist and druggist, which lasted for five years. Hearnshaw toyed with the idea of devoting himself to the Wesleyan Church before abandoning it in favour of studying for the London Matriculation examination in 1889. Brief stints as a school master followed while he prepared for the Arts examination of the University of London, but in 1893 an unexpected inheritance allowed him to realise his ambition of studying history at John Seeley's Cambridge. Much to his frustration, Hearnshaw graduated with second class honours. However, he became Professor of History at the Hartley Institution in Southampton in 1900.[5] From 1910 to 1912 Hearnshaw occupied the Chair of Modern History at Armstrong College in the University of Durham. And from 1912 to 1934 he was Professor of Medieval History at King's College, London.[6] It was at Kings that Hearnshaw cemented his reputation as a historian and intensified his role as a public intellectual. As Reba Soffer argues, Hearnshaw was a keen advocate of public lectures and he made occasional attempts to write for a mass market.[7] Like other historians of his era, Hearnshaw saw himself not only as an educator but as a maker of citizens.[8] At the same time, Hearnshaw always maintained that he had no official party political connection in his publications, but he lectured at Ashridge College where he encouraged audiences to support the Conservative party.[9]

Soffer informs us that Hearnshaw abandoned Fabian socialism and then free trade liberalism before adopting 'a life-long allegiance to a meritocratic reading of conservatism in

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[4] This change Hearnshaw described as revolutionary. Not only could his father no longer afford the fees but 'in the event of his death, his family would be left in desperate poverty'. Hearnshaw, *Some memories of an elderly man*, p. 23.
[5] Ibid., pp. 25-47.
[6] See also Soffer, *History, historians, and conservatism*, pp. 51-52.
[7] Ibid., pp. 53, 60-63, 79. Public lectures were well-attended throughout the interwar years and their audiences often included lawyers, bankers, city men, and political figures. The total numbers attending all public lectures at King's College, London, rose from a few hundred in 1913 to over 33,000 in 1928-9. Hearnshaw contributed an 80 page book to Benn's Sixpenny Library: F.J.C. Hearnshaw, *The development of political ideas* (London, 1927).
[8] Soffer, *History, historians, and conservatism*, p. 53; see also F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'The relation of history to politics', *Contemporary Review*, 804 (December 1932), pp. 706-8; and, 'The teaching of economic history', *Contemporary Review*, 150 (July 1936), p. 51.
[9] Soffer, *History, historians, and conservatism*, pp. 60-1. Hearnshaw's denial of Conservative party affiliation was made in F.J.C. Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England. An analytical, historical, and political survey* (London, 1933), p. vi.

which a small, effective elite was to be responsible for leading the weaker majority'.[10] But she suggests Hearnshaw's 'most important effort to reach those with influence was as a passionate missionary for a forward looking conservatism that met the imperatives of a challenged Britain, especially after the Great War'.[11] This chapter challenges her interpretation by arguing that Hearnshaw's importance was as an advocate, not of a new 'paternalistic conservatism', but of a reworked version of nineteenth-century economic liberalism and constitutionalism which was ultimately unsuited to the challenges posed by mass democracy.

Universal Suffrage and Party Political Realignment

Hearnshaw's memoirs throw new light on his involvement with Conservative politics in the interwar period. Not only do they confirm Soffer's arguments about the political connections that Hearnshaw made through his public lectures at Kings College London, but they show that he was more politically active after his retirement in 1934. Public lectures at Kings were often chaired by politicians and when Hearnshaw lectured on Disraeli in 1926, it was Disraeli's nephew, Major Coningsby Disraeli, who chaired the meeting. Coningsby even invited Hearnshaw to spend time at the family home in preparation for his lecture; a cherished moment that was never forgotten.[12] While at Kings, Hearnshaw was responsible for overseeing lunch-hour political meetings between students and Conservative speakers, which included L.S. Amery, Alan Lennox-Boyd, Lord Lloyd, W. Greaves-Lord, and Arthur Steel-Maitland. We know from private correspondence that Arthur Bryant was invited by Hearnshaw to attend Steel-Maitland's talk, which was on the first year's work of the National Government in 1932.[13] Hearnshaw states the meetings had to be closed down because of the responses of students to Conservative speakers in the 1930s: 'The meetings were interesting and lively. In fact after some ten years, they became so lively that the Union Society had to order their discontinuance. The growth of the habit of expressing dissent from the sentiments of the speakers by means of tin whistles, rattles, fireworks, and smoke bombs

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[10] Soffer, *History, historians, and conservatism*, p. 52.
[11] Ibid., p. 60.
[12] Hearnshaw, *Some memories of an elderly man,* p. 113.
[13] F.J.C. Hearnshaw to Arthur Bryant, 11 November 1932, Kings College London, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Arthur Bryant papers, E2/1/Hearnshaw.

became so alarming as to threaten the nerves of the distinguished visitors and even the safety of the college.'[14] Hearnshaw's account of his presence at an important policy meeting at Ashridge in 1929 also signals his proximity to the Conservative leadership: 'My last visit to Ashridge that year was on December 14-15 to attend a conference of politicians, Central Office officials, and lecturers, at which general problems of policy and procedure were discussed. Mr Baldwin was present in most genial mood. My old Peterhouse colleague, Sir Geoffrey Ellis was in the Chair, and he called upon me to open the discussion.'[15] It is clear, then, that Hearnshaw's Conservative credentials and his political connections were established during the 1920s, but he refrained from formalising his ties with the Conservative party until he retired from the historical profession in 1934.

Hearnshaw then became an active member of his local Conservative association in Oxted, Surrey. He was a leading committee member and Association vice-president, taking 'an active part in the election of 1935 in which Mr Charles Emmott was returned as M.P'.[16] If retirement prompted Hearnshaw's official membership of the Conservative party, it was both the economic crisis of 1929-31 and Hitler's rise to power in Germany that renewed his interest in political journalism: 'In the circumstances, it was impossible for a historian to abstract himself from the affairs of his own time, or to refrain from forming and expressing opinions upon current events. On matters of immediate urgency I regularly (particularly during the years 1934-39) gave utterance to my views in articles published in the *National Review*, the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Contemporary*, and other magazines.'[17] Hearnshaw lectured at Ashridge on at least ten occasions between 1930 and 1934, but many of his lectures after his retirement were conducted on behalf of the Conservative party or at the request of other Conservative historians. Hearnshaw prepared and delivered a series of Oxford extension lectures for Marriott in late 1934 when he was taken ill.[18] Hearnshaw also gave a series of lectures on India to the South East Surrey Conservative Association in

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[14] Hearnshaw, *Some memories of an elderly man*, pp. 113-4.
[15] Ibid., p. 121.
[16] Ibid., p. 150.
[17] Ibid., p. 144.
[18] Ibid., p. 148. Hearnshaw was in irregular correspondence with Marriott because he thanked Marriot for a kind and critical review of his book *Germany the aggressor throughout the ages* after its publication in 1940, and he mentioned that he had only just missed Marriott at a recent BA lecture by the historian G.P. Gooch. See F.J.C. Hearnshaw to J.A.R. Marriott, 21 November 1940, York City Archives, J.A.R. Marriott papers, Acc 140. Envelope marked 'Letters of Appreciation and Criticism, mostly dated 1939-40'.

February 1935, a lecture on the British constitution at a Conservative education meeting in Blackpool in February 1936, and a lecture on democracy and dictatorship for the London University Conservative Association at 'Unionist Central Offices' in April 1937. Hearnshaw even paid a special visit to Swansea in receipt of an invitation from the local Conservative association to lecture on socialism in November 1938: 'I had a friendly though critical reception at this headquarters of South Welsh Communism.'[19] Clearly, Hearnshaw was well-known in elite Conservative circles and also amongst party workers who either attended Ashridge or invited him to speak at their local Conservative associations. Hearnshaw's reputation as a Conservative speaker reinforced his importance as an influential Conservative voice in the periodical press in the 1930s.

Hearnshaw's plan was for an alternative Conservative-Liberal politics, which would combat the Labour party and the Socialist League on the left and the BUF on the right. Hearnshaw's 'national' politics leaned to the right of Baldwin's centrist National Government. These political proposals owed much to his fears about mass democracy and his idea for a meritocratic society. Hearnshaw's arguments against universal suffrage were propagated in two articles for the *National Review* in July and November 1933. Hearnshaw argued for a restrictive voting franchise because it would aid the return of an organic 'English' parliamentary system. In his view, the old English parliament 'was wholly alien from the representative assemblies that sprang up like fungi in the nineteenth century from the seed of Rousseau's ideas forced in the dunghill of the French Revolution'.[20] Continental radicalism had helped transform the country's 'admirable' parliament through 'a series of so-called Reform Acts' into an 'ultra-democratic assembly'. Hearnshaw acknowledged elements of the 1832 Reform Act were painfully necessary, particularly the redistribution of seats, but he judged the introduction of a new franchise to be a 'fatal error'. What really irked Hearnshaw about the 1832 Act was the introduction of what he saw as a new principle in English life—once again, it was Rousseau's fault—'the doctrine that the franchise is a personal right rather than a public function' and it was this that was responsible for the establishment of universal suffrage. The franchise extensions of 1867, 1884, 1918, and 1928, had produced a representative system alien to British tradition. MPs were no longer

[19] Hearnshaw, *Some memories of an elderly man*, p. 148.
[20] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Universal suffrage and parliamentary government', *National Review*, 101 (July 1933), p. 56. For a brief discussion of Hearnshaw's ideas in relation to Rousseau see Soffer, 'The long nineteenth century', p. 149.

representative of their communities because they had been replaced by the 'utterly inorganic and irrational single-member constituencies', containing an almost equal number of constituents. Local men had been replaced as electoral candidates with 'carpet-baggers' sent down from CCO who cared little for their local environment. The Member of Parliament's task of appealing to a momentary, all-powerful, electorate was an act of horror, which resulted in 'the reduction of politics to a demoralising endeavour to delude and debauch Demos'.[21]

Hearnshaw proposed a series of changes aimed at restoring the constitution to its sturdier and much healthier self.[22] As he wrote in *Conservatism in England*, recent legislation had destroyed the celebrated balance of powers within the constitution. The Parliament Act of 1911 resulted in the superiority of the House of Commons over the House of Lords and the franchise extensions of 1918 and 1928 produced one dominant class in the electorate. Hearnshaw's remedies sought to dilute the democratic element of the constitution; these included a reduction of the 'pauper vote', the raising of standards of electoral qualifications, and an increase in voting power for the 'educated and thrifty classes'. His plans for House of Lords reform would have resulted in a mixed chamber; 100 hereditary representatives would be retained, but they would have to be elected amongst themselves, and they would sit alongside representatives of interest groups who were not currently part of the legislature. These would include church and trade union leaders, financial magnates, civil servants, members of the press, the universities, and schools.[23] Although Hearnshaw made provisions for trades unions to be represented in a reformed upper chamber we also know that he was extremely hostile to trade union strike activity. This was a constant and relentless theme for Hearnshaw who was still complaining about the 'indiscipline of democracy' in 1937 when London busmen went out on strike: unless the public were 'resolute to resist the anarchic tyranny of such anti-democratic bodies as the busmen's committee' Britain would descend into the iron grip of Nazism, Fascism, or Bolshevism.[24] Therefore Hearnshaw wanted to eliminate the strike weapon from the trade union arsenal and replace it with a form of corporatist representation, which would have been swamped by conservative opinion in the House of Lords.

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[21] Hearnshaw, 'Universal suffrage and parliamentary government', pp. 56-9.
[22] Ibid., 59.
[23] Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England*, pp. 300-2.
[24] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'The indiscipline of democracy', *National Review*, 109 (July 1937), pp. 36-41.

Hearnshaw repeated these arguments for the conservative right-wing readership of the *National Review*.[25] In a companion piece written just a few months later, Hearnshaw reaffirmed the dangers of universal suffrage in view of Baldwin's recent broadcast on the English national character. At first, Hearnshaw drew on Baldwin's rhetoric and repeated many of his claims:

> British people possess those qualities of heart and mind, that sense of community, and that faculty for forming a general will, that are the essential requisites of democratic administration. They have acquired these characteristics and aptitudes as the result of a long apprenticeship in self-government—in township and borough, in hundred and shire, in craft guild and merchant mystery, in chartered company and colonial settlement.[26]

But in the same article Hearnshaw argued parliamentary democracy was now 'on its trial' because only educated elites possessed these qualities—'the immense majority of mankind are as yet not civilised, and the ratio of the barbarians to the civilised at the present day tends to increase'.[27]

Although Soffer is right to argue Hearnshaw believed in education as a means of moulding Britain's new electorate into responsible citizens, clearly he was well-aware of the limitations of what could be achieved in the short-term. Hearnshaw turned towards franchise restrictions, constitutional reforms, and eugenics politics because adequate education was not yet available for all members of the new electorate: 'In education, indeed, intellectual and moral, lies the one hope of the salvation of democracy. But what is called education to-day, in its lower ranges, does little more than quicken the natural capacity of unregenerate man to absorb and disseminate pernicious error.'[28] Hearnshaw believed that the working classes would not be able to access *en masse* the forms of education he considered necessary and he was full of disdain for their attempts to educate themselves:

> The reading of the average man-in-the-street, the drama that he supports by his attendance in the gallery, the films he visits, the music to which he dances, the recreation with which he kills the boredom of leisure, all testify to an infantile immaturity of intellect, taste and judgement. And if this is true of the man-in-the-street, still more emphatically is it true of the woman-in-the-kitchen, who lacks in

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[25] Hearnshaw, 'Universal suffrage and parliamentary government', p. 59.
[26] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Safe for democracy', *National Review*, 101 (November 1933), p. 585. For Baldwin's broadcast see Stanley Baldwin, 'Our national character', *The Listener* (4 October 1933), pp. 481-2; and, *The Times*, 26 September 1933. The original broadcast was made on 25 October 1933.
[27] Hearnshaw, 'Safe for democracy', p. 580.
[28] Ibid.

> her isolation even that crude training in politics that the street and the public-house supply.[29]

There was clearly a stark contrast here between Hearnshaw's utopian view of Britain's civic traditions and the reactionary policies he felt Conservatives should pursue to make constitutional politics safe in the 1930s.

Hearnshaw's other main political intervention during this period was written in response to Conservative debates about transforming the Conservative party into a new National party based on support for the incumbent National Government. Hearnshaw drew on comments made by the Conservative MP, the Duchess of Atholl. She had responded negatively to those 100 Conservatives who signed a manifesto urging the formation of a National party. Atholl stressed the importance of traditional political parties based on fundamental principles and warned the Conservative party leadership not to formalise a deal because it would strengthen extremist movements like the BUF.[30] Hearnshaw agreed with Atholl, but he reaffirmed his belief in a two-party system. Hearnshaw drew comparisons between the disintegration of the Whig party at the end of the eighteenth century and the virtual disappearance of the Liberals as a party political force in the 1930s. Hearnshaw explained how the 'solid and sober section of the Whigs', including the Duke of Portland and Edmund Burke, joined William Pitt to form 'the great Conservative Party of the nineteenth century'. Whereas the 'flighty and ideological section of the Whigs, led by Fox and Sheridan, remained to form the radical nucleus round which the nineteenth-century Liberal Party was built up by Palmerston and Gladstone, Cobden and Bright'. This resulted in two constitutional parties: the party of the right, of order and authority, and the party of the left, of freedom and revolt.[31] Hearnshaw argued that a similar realignment of party politics was now imminent and Liberals would have to choose between the Conservative party and the Labour party at the next general election.

Hearnshaw also wanted to convince right-wing Conservatives of the need to incorporate sections of the Liberal party into a new alternative Conservative-Liberal bloc. Hearnshaw argued Liberalism had 'lost its soul', but he stressed that its original mandate (before Lloyd George corrupted it) was well-suited to modern Conservative politics: 'The essential spirit of Liberalism—the spirit that animated the Liberal Unionists of 1885 and the National Liberals

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[29] Hearnshaw, 'Safe for democracy', pp. 580-1.
[30] See Katharine Atholl, 'Sub-labels', *National Review*, 103 (September 1934), pp. 313-9.
[31] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Liberalism', *National Review*, 103 (November 1934), p. 586.

of 1931, a spirit utterly alien from that of Mr. Lloyd George—will find its natural home in the midst of modern Conservatism.'[32] Hearnshaw advised 'collectivists, who in their passion for equality, have forgotten the meaning of liberty' to join Labour, and those who 'remain true to the fundamental principle of their creed, namely, the defence of freedom', to ally themselves with the Conservative party.[33]

Why was Hearnshaw so confident about the success of a narrow Conservative-Liberal politics in the 1930s? Hearnshaw explained his thinking in a sustained critique of the Conservative leadership published shortly before the 1935 election. He argued that 'it is not necessary to pander to the proletariat in order to win electoral support' because the 1929 general election had revealed that working-class voters accepted doles and franchises, but they would not respect those who introduced them. Hearnshaw believed 'the triumph of Conservatism' would 'not come by means of feeble fishing for Socialist votes with baits selected from smaller Socialist worms' because 'the better part of the British electorate responds most surely to nobler appeals' like those of 1914, 1926, and 1931.[34] This is crucial for understanding the difference between Hearnshaw's political thinking in the 1920s and his ideas for transforming the Conservative party after 1931. It did not occur to Hearnshaw that the overwhelming success of the National Government was at least partly built on its willingness to compromise with the left in order to attract working-class voters. Hearnshaw grew over-confident about the success of the Conservative party in the 1930s because of the National Government's ability to appeal to working-class voters and he took it for granted that his own narrower Conservative-Liberal coalition would be able to achieve similar results.

For Hearnshaw, the Conservative party was deeply divided in the mid-1930s, not just on the Government of India bill, but on issues of fundamental principle. The reason he gave for this potential schism was that 'a great many other measures which official Conservatism now tends to support…are not Conservative measures at all'.[35] Hearnshaw criticised many of the Conservative policies under Baldwin's leadership and he thought the party's financial policies were particularly irresponsible. In 1935 he wrote, 'The lowering of the limit of old-age pensions and the granting of doles to widows and orphans, however desirable in

[32] Hearnshaw, 'Liberalism', p. 593.
[33] Ibid., p. 590.
[34] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'The crisis of Conservatism', *National Review*, 104 (June 1935), pp. 757-8.
[35] Ibid., p. 756.

circumstances of national affluence, were quite indefensible at a time of extreme financial stringency (1924-5). Similarly, the recent restoration of the 1931 "cuts" in salaries and in unemployment relief is wholly premature and improper.'[36] Attacking Neville Chamberlain, Hearnshaw asked, 'Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer never intend again to use a Budget surplus for its proper purpose, namely, the reduction of the national debt?'[37] The National Government's flirtation with the politics of planning was even more bewildering for Hearnshaw, who argued such policies demanded much higher levels of taxation and more bureaucrats, while they also infringed on English liberties. Again, planning was 'more consonant with Socialism than with Conservatism'.[38] Hearnshaw could not accept the party leadership's appeasement of the left, preferring a narrower coalition of anti-collectivist Liberals with the Conservative party to form a permanent coalition of the constitutional right. He insisted it was 'the duty of the Conservative Party to oppose the demoralizing and destructive policy of the Labour party, not to imitate it, even on a reduced scale'.[39] Hearnshaw still considered Baldwin to be a 'noble man' and a representative of a 'sane Conservatism' in this period.[40] But he argued Baldwin's policies would result in the 'disruption of the Conservative party and the confusion of British politics for a whole generation'.[41]

The 'Riddle of the Universe' and the Idea of a 'National Church'

Too little has been made of the influence of nineteenth and early twentieth century biology and psychology on Hearnshaw's political and religious thinking.[42] It is impossible to understand Hearnshaw's political solutions to the challenges of the 1930s without acknowledging the impact on his thinking of Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, Ernst Haeckel's answer to the 'riddle of the universe', and Herbert Spencer's arguments about collective experience and race. Hearnshaw was most concerned about sustaining the

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[36] Hearnshaw, 'The crisis of Conservatism', p. 757.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., pp. 757-9.
[40] F.J.C. Hearnshaw to Arthur Bryant, 2 June 1937, Kings College London, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Arthur Bryant papers, E2/1/Hearnshaw.
[41] Hearnshaw, 'The crisis of Conservatism', pp. 760-1.
[42] Soffer, *History, historians, and conservatism*, pp. 59-63. Soffer mentions Hearnshaw's attempts to explore disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and biology, but only in passing.

relationship between Church and state in Britain because he believed in the strength of an authoritative ethical message for British society. But his reading of scientific literature allowed him to prioritise politics over religion. Hearnshaw was more comfortable than many Conservatives when trying to bridge the gap between Liberal Nonconformity and Conservative Anglicanism because his reading of evolutionary science had weakened his adherence to formal Christian teaching. Christian ethics continued to play an important role in Hearnshaw's politics, but his belief in God as a transcendent being waned considerably during the 1930s.

The influence of scientific thinking on Hearnshaw's political ideas can be found in two of his most important writings: his lecture on Herbert Spencer at King's College, London (1933) and his memoir (written in 1944). Hearnshaw was mainly interested in Spencer's *The Principles of Psychology* (1855). He argued that Spencer's intervention offered 'the brilliant and penetrating suggestion that ideas that transcend the experience of the individual are yet derived from the experience of the race and are transmitted by inheritance'.[43] This confirmed his belief in the importance of cooperation between the individual and society (or the racial community), but it left little room for the role of God in human development. For Hearnshaw, scripture was unlikely to provide solutions to modern-day problems if God had no hand in the formulation of man's ideas or the creation of his thinking processes. Darwin's theory of natural selection also influenced Hearnshaw because it rejected older Victorian arguments about evolution. Spencer's reading of Darwin had led him to abandon ideas about inevitability in favour of what he famously termed 'the survival of the fittest'. This backed-up Hearnshaw's cultural and political concerns about the dominant role of the 'masses' in British society and it alerted him to the potential use of eugenics as a means of speeding up the processes of natural selection in order to prevent any further degradation of British life.[44]

Hearnshaw identified 'mental defectives' as people who had no future in the development of British society; this group consisted of the 'feeble minded', criminals, and slum dwellers, but more controversial was his argument that unskilled manual labourers were equally redundant.[45] Hearnshaw's solution was to implement compulsory segregation

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[43] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Herbert Spencer and the individualists', in F.J.C. Hearnshaw (ed.), *The social and political ideas of some representative thinkers of the Victorian age* (London, 1933), p. 64.
[44] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Some disregarded lessons of history', *National Review*, 102 (April 1934), p. 470.
[45] For some clarification of Hearnshaw's targets, see F.J.C. Hearnshaw, *A survey of socialism. analytical, historical, and critical* (London, 1928), pp. 442-6.

and sterilisation policies. He was ambiguous about whether unskilled workers would be subject to these acts of state intervention, but they probably would have been because Hearnshaw saw them and 'mental defectives' as a combined threat to British society. He feared both groups could be manipulated by populist leaders.[46] Hearnshaw's reluctance to embrace universal suffrage was not just symbolic of old-fashioned conservatism; it was based on his interpretation of evolution and natural selection. However, Hearnshaw never advocated extermination policies akin to those of Hitler's Third Reich. Hearnshaw wanted to prevent the future degradation of the race, but he argued against the maltreatment of those in the present.[47] There are, of course, great contradictions in Hearnshaw's thinking on race, none more so than with his idea that unskilled workers and the poor formed a constant homogeneous community that could be readily identified. Certainly, compulsory segregation and sterilisation policies would not be regarded as acts of patient humanity by recipients.

In his memoirs, Hearnshaw confirms that it was his views on the applicability of evolutionary science to psychology and the formulation of man's ideas that ultimately led to the loosening of his own religious convictions in the 1930s: Hearnshaw became preoccupied with resolving the increasing dichotomy between his views on evolution and his support for Christianity, and these questions informed his plans for a permanent political and religious alliance between 'sane' Conservatives and Liberals, and for a closer relationship between Church and state. Hearnshaw wrote that after 1935 he and his wife regularly attended Oxted parish church, which was Anglican:

> [T]he Sermons of the High Anglican rector, and his swift succession of ephemeral curates, touch the limits of the incredible and absurd. Nevertheless I continue to go because, in spite of growing incredulity, I feel the need of bowing down before the mystery of the universe, and of witnessing the great act of corporate worship…I still love to hear the chants and hymns that I listened to long ago, the magnificent cadences of the Bible fall with grateful familiarity upon my ears; the splendid stories of Old and New Testament heroes never fails to stir my imagination; and above all the unique majesty and loveliness of Jesus makes a matchless appeal. But when the creeds are recited, I realise how far I have travelled from the centre of the Church. If I were asked to give my own answer to the insoluble "Riddle of the Universe", I feel it would have to be expressed in much the same language as that employed by Ernst Haeckel in the great book that bears the title Welt Rathsel.[48]

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[46] Hearnshaw, 'Some disregarded lessons of history', p. 470.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Hearnshaw, *Some memories of an elderly man*, pp. 154-5.

Hearnshaw claimed he wrote his memoirs for his children and grandchildren, and it would seem that his decision to summarise his philosophy by referring to the language of Haeckel's work was an extremely important one; it should be read as an act of clarification for those interested in his thinking because it resonates with much of his literary output in the 1930s.

Hearnshaw refers to Haeckel's *Die Welträthsel*.[49] Hearnshaw accepted Haeckel's idea of working towards a form of 'monist religion', which combined the teachings of scientific evolution with Christian ethics because it helped him legitimise his preference for an elitist society and a narrow Conservative-Liberal politics.[50] Haeckel claimed 'psychic life' was the product of evolutionary biological change.[51] Hearnshaw sympathised with Haeckel's view that existing religious institutions must be utilised rather than overthrown, but on the relationship between Church and state he rejected Haeckel's arguments.[52] Whereas Haeckel believed in the complete separation of Church and state—'a free Church in a free State', like in the United States of America, Hearnshaw suggested Britain was a special case and he argued disestablishment would be grossly counter-productive to the progress of national life.[53]

This section has shown how Hearnshaw constructed his own form of 'social Darwinism' in the 1930s. His ideas drew on Darwin's theory of natural selection and the attempts made by Spencer and Haeckel to apply older theories of evolution to the social sciences. This set the foundation stone for Hearnshaw's belief in a 'National Church', which motivated his idea for a permanent Conservative-Liberal alliance in the 1930s.

Publicising the Idea of a ' National Church'

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[49] The book was published in English as *The riddle of the universe* in 1900.

[50] Key to Haeckel's 'monist religion' was his rejection of some of the fundamental teachings of the Christian Church. Haeckel wrote, 'The monism of the cosmos which we establish thereon proclaims the absolute dominion of "the great eternal iron laws" throughout the universe. It thus shatters, at the same time, the three central dogmas of the dualistic philosophy—the personality of God, the immortality of the soul, and the freedom of the will.' Ernst Haeckel, *The riddle of the universe* (1900; New York, 1992 edn.), p. 381.

[51] Haeckel, *The riddle of the universe*, p. 109. Haeckel rejected Christian 'dogma' and disparaged 'so-called "revelations"', but he praised the 'ethical value of pure primitive Christianity and the ennobling influence of this "religion of love" on the history of civilization'. Ibid., p. 130.

[52] Ibid., p. 336. Haeckel wrote, 'we must appeal as much as possible to its existing institutions in the establishment of our monistic religion. We do not seek a mighty revolution, but a rational reformation, of our religious life'.

[53] Ibid., p. 360; and, F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Church and state: their past and present relations', *Hibbert Journal*, 32 (October 1933), p. 115.

Hearnshaw's 'National Church' was centred on the Church of England, but he addressed three different religious publics he thought would be interested in his idea. The first was the broad non-sectarian readership of the *Hibbert Journal*, the second was the broad conservative readership of the *Nineteenth Century and After*, and the third was the much narrower Nonconformist readership of the *Methodist Recorder*. Hearnshaw asked these religious publics to make a choice in the 1930s: help foster a renewed sense of religious cooperation through the means of a 'National Church' or invite the erosion of Christian values at the hands of revolutionary creeds now challenging Britain's established order. Socialism was seen as the most dangerous of these revolutionary creeds thanks to the Socialist League's efforts to radicalise the politics of the Labour party. Only a permanent Conservative-Liberal alliance would be able to defend Christian values and their influence on British society. As Hearnshaw was not openly Conservative, he was able to put forward these political messages without compromising his intellectual and religious credentials. Ross McKibbin reminds us that 'religion remained a significant, if declining, source of division' in the interwar years.[54] At the same time, Philip Williamson argues that at 'each general election from 1922 to 1935 the outcome was thought to depend chiefly upon the choices of Liberal or uncommitted central voters'.[55] Hearnshaw's plan for a narrow Conservative-Liberal politics might not have been practical in electoral terms, but his arguments and his publications helped foster areas of agreement between Conservatives and Liberals in the 1930s. Ironically, Hearnshaw's arguments boosted Baldwin's 'national' politics because his idea for a 'National Church' fitted Baldwin's own ecumenical Christian message.

The *Hibbert Journal* was a liberal Christian periodical, dedicated to the study of religion, theology, and philosophy.[56] It suited Hearnshaw's ambitions because it was read by Anglicans and Nonconformists of all denominations. In October 1933 Hearnshaw used his knowledge of medieval history and his reputation as a public intellectual to remind religious and educated elites of a more successful period of religious cooperation, both within the Christian community itself and between Church and state. Hearnshaw argued against Church

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[54] Ross McKibbin, *Classes and cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 90-1.
[55] Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin. Conservative leadership and national values* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 228-9.
[56] L.P. Jacks, *The confessions of an octogenarian* (London, 1942), p. 166. Jacks was editor between 1902 and 1947.

disestablishment in response to the parliamentary rejection of Prayer Book reform, which had been submitted by the Church of England's National Assembly for ratification in 1927 and 1928.[57] The relationship between Church and state was subject to much scrutiny in the early 1930s, which was precisely why Hearnshaw intervened in the ensuing debate.[58] Hearnshaw urged his readers to consider the potential effects of disestablishment on the British constitution and society. He argued strongly that the Church was the 'mother' of the state, but he also thought it unrealistic and inconsistent with Christianity to merge the two institutions.[59] The separation of Church and state was central to 'the dualism of Christ', but even if Church and state were not one entity, they formed an important alliance, they spoke with authority within their own separate spheres of public life, and they were capable of closer cooperation.[60] Hearnshaw concluded his article by predicting the likely outcomes of Church disestablishment in Britain. The state would lose much of its ethical and moral authority without the patronage of the Church, whereas the Church would lose its grip on the nation and be liable to fragment without the authority of the state. Together, Church and state represented an unrivalled, authoritative, moral force—the backbone of the British constitution.[61]

As a medieval historian, Hearnshaw was keen to provide historical examples of greater religious cooperation. He argued the demise of the Holy Roman Empire, its effective existence as a German national state, and the rise of rival national states across Europe during the Middle Ages, gave Christianity a brief opportunity to implement its more natural role: 'The Pope became the overlord of the national kings, and western Christendom, disintegrated politically, retained only the unity of religious faith and ecclesiastical organisation. The States became part of the Church.'[62] However, Hearnshaw was not advocating a return to the dominance of Catholicism or indeed the conditions of the Middle Ages. He admitted that his own example was littered with problems:

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[57] Hearnshaw, 'Church and state', pp. 104, 116.
[58] The Archbishops' Commission on Church and State was appointed in 1930 and when it published its report in 1935 it recommended that matters of doctrine and worship be no longer subject to parliamentary control. See Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck (eds), *The Oxford guide to the book of common prayer. A worldwide survey* (Oxford, 2006), p. 243.
[59] Hearnshaw, 'Church and State', p. 115.
[60] Ibid., pp. 111-5.
[61] Ibid., pp. 115-16.
[62] Ibid., p. 112.

> This ideal condition of things—whose perfection, I fear it must be admitted, was mainly theoretical—was terminated by the Papal captivity (A.D. 1309-76), the Great Schism (A.D. 1378-1417), the Conciliar Revolt (A.D. 1409-49) and the Reformation (A.D. 1517 *et seq*.). The Catholic Church itself was disintegrated, and its fragments, even when they remained in communion with Rome, tended to identify themselves with the new national States.[63]

For Hearnshaw, Christian duality was lost as a hegemonic European ideal in the Middle Ages, but it still provided a shining example of how the political and religious world should be structured in the long-term. Hearnshaw accepted that the religious and political climate of the 1930s did not predispose itself to international cooperation so he concentrated on nation states; he informed his readers that it was possible to enact a renewed cooperation between Church and state in Britain.[64] Hearnshaw summarised his views: 'Not separation but closer association should be the watchword of the future; not disintegration, but a re-union that shall restore on an infinitely broader basis the impressive and powerful solidarity of Medieval Christendom.'[65]

Hearnshaw drew on Coleridge to historicise his ideas on Church and state for conservative readers. He focussed on Coleridge's own idea for the co-existence of a 'Christian Church' and 'National Church'.[66] In a key passage Hearnshaw writes of Coleridge, 'He felt that there was urgent call for change; but it was change, not in the direction of the novel and untried—it was change in a backward direction, a return to the original ideas of Church and State which had been forgotten, a recovery of a pristine purity that had been lost.'[67] Coleridge not only accepted the existence of a worldly 'Christian Church', he proposed 'a "National Church" coincident with the State, a Church supported by the Government, and in return supporting it; an estate of the realm, represented as such in Parliament, devoted to the great secular work of education and culture; free from the restrictions of creed and ritual; not necessarily Christian at all'.[68] For Hearnshaw, 'the essence of the Coleridge tradition in the sphere of education was the indissoluble union of

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[63] Hearnshaw, 'Church and state', pp. 112-3.
[64] Ibid., p. 115.
[65] Ibid., p. 116.
[66] For an excellent analysis of Coleridge's work *On the constitution of Church and the state*, see Alan Gregory, 'Grace and nation: Coleridge's *On the constitution of Church and state*', *Journal of Anglican Studies*, 5 (2007), pp. 187-208.
[67] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Coleridge the Conservative. A centenary study', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 116 (July 1934), p. 108.
[68] Ibid., p. 111.

secular and sacred learning'.[69] Here we find ourselves recalling Hearnshaw's numerous comments about the need for a 'moral' education, the lack of 'moral qualifications' amongst the working classes, and the 'moral inadequacies' of continental peoples living under dictatorial regimes, which will be discussed below. Hearnshaw summarised Coleridge's 'message for the present age': '"The proper object and end of the National Church is civilisation with freedom," and the prime function of its ministers, the "clerisy," is "to form and train up the people of the country to be obedient, free, useful, organisable subjects, citizens, and patriots, living to the benefit of the State and prepared to die for its defence."'[70] Hearnshaw's reading of evolutionary psychology allowed him to re-open key nineteenth century debates about the importance of a ruling elite or 'clerisy', which both Coleridge and Mill had experimented with in their own writings.[71] Hearnshaw's intellectual thinking was firmly rooted in the past and it is difficult to conclude that he was representative of a 'forward looking conservatism' in the 1930s. But he was keen to persuade conservatives of the value of an ecumenical outlook. Similarly, in *Conservatism in England*, he informed conservatives that he hoped 'dissenters of all forms of the Christian creed', like Bolingbroke, would 'display the religious spirit in a still wider latitude'.[72]

Hearnshaw also addressed Nonconformist Liberals in his articles for the *Methodist Recorder*. A more gentle approach concealed the same underlying message of religious and political cooperation, which was more demanding of Nonconformists than it was of Anglicans. Hearnshaw explained to his readers that political problems were now 'urgent and full of perplexity' and he asked them 'What does Christian principle say, for example, concerning the problems of war and military service; patriotism and cosmopolitism; socialism and capitalism; marriage and divorce; unemployment and poor relief?' The answers to these difficult questions, he insisted, were not obvious ones, 'because the education of the Christian conscience demands the careful and intelligent examination of each separate case as it arises'.[73] Hearnshaw propagated his idea for a 'National Church' without labelling it one because as a Wesleyan Methodist he understood that many Nonconformists would be extremely sceptical about submitting themselves to the auspices of

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[69] Hearnshaw, 'Coleridge the Conservative', p. 112.
[70] Ibid., p. 112-3.
[71] Nicholas Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill: a biography* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 97-101.
[72] Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England*, p. 300.
[73] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'The Christian standard of life. Religion and morality, duties to God and to one's Fellows', *Methodist Recorder*, 12 September 1935, p. 15.

the Church of England. Instead, Hearnshaw concentrated on the teachings of Christian ethics and appealed to their moral consciences as a way of uniting religious opinion and making the 'right' political decisions. Mirroring the language of Haeckel, Hearnshaw argued their responses to political problems would be wrong unless they were 'inspired by the sovereign principle of love'. He wrote, 'it is extremely likely to be wrong if it depends for its validity, not on a rational application of this great principle of love, but on isolated passages of scripture. For even the most explicit commands of Christ himself were conditioned by time and place, and it is the duty of Christian intelligence to ask how far they are applicable in circumstances wholly different'.[74] Hearnshaw's argument that Christian love rather than scripture provided the answers to the most pressing political problems of the day was a conscious political move, which sought to remove denominational differences in the minds of the public in order to unite Conservatives and Liberals. Hearnshaw even invoked the dual-threat of revolutionary socialism and fascism as a means of forcing readers to make a political choice:

> Probably never in any preceding age have the traditions of Christian ethics been so directly and boldly challenged as they are at the present moment. It is therefore imperative that all who wish to maintain the heritage of two thousand years of Christian civilisation should carefully consider in the light of first principles, and in particular the principle of universal and all-embracing love, what is the Christian's duty to God, to society, to the State, to the Family, and to the Self.[75]

Hearnshaw was convinced his readers would welcome a constitutional and religious alliance between Conservatives and Liberals if politicians appealed to their shared Christian morals.

The political value of Hearnshaw's inclusive religious message is best illustrated by editorial notes in the *Methodist Recorder*. Nonconformists certainly still believed in the importance of Liberal votes in the late 1930s:

> The "floating vote"—especially that part of it originally in the old Liberal grouping—which may turn an election contrary to all expectation, tended to attach itself to the Government, partly because of the personality of the Prime Minister, partly because the Government has shown some consideration for its "National" mandate. How far the retirement of Mr. Baldwin will affect this tendency, future by-elections may reveal. It is certain that if Labour showed any real capacity for leadership in its Parliamentary ranks, a large body of the "floating vote" would drift into its electoral net.[76]

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[74] Hearnshaw, 'The Christian Standard of Life', p. 15.
[75] Ibid.
[76] 'Notes of the week', *Methodist Recorder*, 6 May 1937, p. 3.

Although Baldwin's own inclusive religious message was essential to the recruiting of Liberal Nonconformist votes, the Conservative leader could not speak with the same religious and intellectual authority as Hearnshaw in Nonconformist (particularly Methodist) circles or with such regularity.[77] Baldwin's and Hearnshaw's views on the Church of England and the importance of a broader 'National Church' were almost identical, but the political motives behind Hearnshaw's literary work were different and they demonstrate how others helped sustain important elements of Baldwin's public message in the 1930s.[78] At the same time, Hearnshaw was electorally naïve; Baldwin's ability to resist calls for a narrower 'national' Conservative politics was more in keeping with the demands of mass democracy.

Responding to the Totalitarian Challenge

Hearnshaw, like other literary Conservatives, such as Arthur Bryant, played a vital role combating extremist views in right-wing Conservative circles. A point humorously acknowledged by Bryant when he declined an invitation from Charles Petrie to attend a dinner in honour of the editor of the *English Review*, Douglas Jerrold, in November 1936:

> I am afraid I cannot come and help you feast Jerrold on December 10th as I shall be lecturing to the proletariat on that evening. So while you are gorging caviare and swilling champagne, and drinking die-hard toasts to the destruction of the toiling masses, think of me kindly cherishing them, binding up their wounds and washing their soiled faces which you in your horrid Fascist manner have ruthlessly ground in the dirt.[79]

Despite their differences, Bryant's comments did not signal a breakdown of relations between him and Petrie, which reminds us that fascism could be discussed and propagated throughout the literary world without damaging one's personal, if not political, reputation

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[77] Hearnshaw was certainly held in high-regard by the Methodist community because he was chosen to write a double-page spread on John Wesley and the history of Methodism in the *Methodist Recorder* as part of its bicentennial celebrations where he referred to his father's own work as a Methodist Minister. See F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'The influence of the Evangelical revival on eighteenth century history', *Methodist Recorder* (The Wesley bicentenary celebration: sixteen page illustrated supplement), 19 May 1938.

[78] For Baldwin's religious background, see Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, pp. 104-5.

[79] Arthur Bryant to Charles Petrie, 5 November 1936, Kings College London, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Arthur Bryant papers, E3/57/2/Petrie.

amongst Conservatives.[80] In fact, academic and literary freedoms were non-negotiable for Conservatives in the 1930s, which is why Hearnshaw's work was so important; it helped sustain constitutional messages within the Conservative party and throughout the periodical press.[81]

One specific example demonstrates the importance of Hearnshaw's anti-totalitarian views at Ashridge. In December 1933, as part of a lecture series on modern political figures, Hearnshaw discussed the merits of King Edward VII.[82] The series contained an important underlying theme—the question of democracy or dictatorship. Hearnshaw used his own lecture to construct an argument for English constitutionalism in opposition to dictatorship, which certainly contrasted with the views of a number of 'fellow-travellers' who took part in the series. Besides Hearnshaw, only R.B. Mowat advocated the preservation of democracy, but even he summarised Aristide Briand's politics as a 'laughing philosophy'.[83] As Soffer explains, 'Hearnshaw chose Edward VII as a representative of the type of person England required'.[84] As Hearnshaw concluded, 'England…has had her period of dictatorships and has long passed beyond it. She is not likely to revert to it.'[85] Bryant's justification for the series was based on the idea that it showcased the men who, 'good or bad, ultimately sway the world'.[86] Hearnshaw's lecture was certainly representative of the good rather than the bad and it provided an important constitutional message—one of continuity—which rivalled Charles Petrie's positive view of Fascist Italy and E.W.D. Tennant's sympathetic account of

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[80] For a comprehensive discussion of pro-fascist, pro-German, and pro-Nazi journalism, see Richard Griffiths, *Fellow travellers of the right: British enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933-39* (Oxford, 1983).

[81] A good example illustrating the level of respect amongst Conservatives for literary freedom is provided by Lovat Dickson (then assistant to Harold Macmillan at the publishers Macmillan & Co.) in 1938. Dickson was deeply concerned about publishing Arthur Bryant's *Unfinished Victory* because it ran contrary to Harold Macmillan's own anti-appeasement views at the time. However, Macmillan sanctioned the book immediately when Dickson raised the issue. See Lovat Dickson, *The house of words* (London, 1963), p. 210.

[82] This was a subject he wrote about elsewhere. See F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'King Edward VII', in F.J.C. Hearnshaw (ed.), *Edwardian England, A.D. 1901-1910: a series of lectures delivered at King's College, University of London, during the session 1932-3* (London, 1933), pp. 29-62. The other participants in the series were R.H. Bruce Lockhart, R.B. Mowat, E.J. Patterson, Charles Petrie, and E.W.D. Tennant. The success of the series convinced Bryant to publish the lectures as a book, for which he wrote the introduction and concluding summary. See Arthur Bryant (ed.), *The man and the hour. Studies of six great men of our time* (London, 1934); and, *Ashridge Journal*, 18 (June 1934), p. 4.

[83] R.B. Mowat, 'Briand', in Bryant (ed.), *The man and the hour*, p. 68.

[84] Soffer, *History, historians, and conservatism*, p. 77.

[85] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Edward VII', in Bryant (ed.), *The man and the hour*, p. 6.

[86] Bryant (ed.), *The man and the hour*, p. 146.

Nazi Germany. This intellectual rivalry between the participants in the series says much about the inclusiveness of the Conservative party and its reliance on constitutionalists like Hearnshaw to keep potential defectors within mainstream Conservative politics.[87] In fact, Hearnshaw enjoyed these intellectual workouts: 'It would be difficult to exaggerate the pleasure which those visits to Ashridge gave me.'[88]

Hearnshaw propagated a clear and consistent anti-totalitarian message in the periodical press. He focussed on preventing right-wing Conservatives from identifying the BUF as the best means of implementing an alternative right-wing agenda and on persuading Liberals that their core ideals were best served by the Conservative party rather than the Labour party in a new two-party system. Hearnshaw was particularly keen to illustrate the failures of continental democracies, branding their subsequent adoption of dictatorship as a desperate (but necessary) attempt to restore order to chaos. In the process, Hearnshaw began to valorise democracy in new and important ways. He warmed to democracy as a form of popular self-government when faced by its negation and he developed a critique of the Labour party based on its 'undemocratic' credentials; intellectually speaking, this was a long way for Hearnshaw to travel in the 1930s.

In November 1933, shortly after Hitler's 'seizure of power', Hearnshaw mocked continental dictators for their inability to abandon the rhetoric of democracy in the *National Review*: 'Even the dictators in the many states of Europe where they hold sway render lip-service to it. Their dictatorships, they profess, are merely temporary and provisional…When the emergency is past and normal conditions recur, then dictatorship will give way once more to popular self-government!'[89] Hearnshaw identified four qualities that were needed if democracy was to flourish; two of these related to the individual citizen—'the fundamental honesty of man' and 'the possession of common sense'—and the others belonged to a successful corporate community—'the solidarity of the community' and 'the existence in the community of a general will'.[90] These qualities, Hearnshaw argued, were seriously lacking in the peoples of continental Europe, especially the lack of 'practical common sense that is necessary for the conduct of affairs by means of the democratic method of discussion and

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[87] Bryant (ed.), *The man and the hour*, p. vii. Bryant described this rivalry explicitly.
[88] Hearnshaw, *Some memories of an elderly man*, p. 148.
[89] Hearnshaw, 'Safe for democracy', pp. 579-80. He repeated this criticism some years later, see F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Democracy to-day', *National Review*, 107 (December 1936), p. 720.
[90] Hearnshaw, 'Safe for democracy', pp. 582-4.

vote'. Hearnshaw argued the division of individuals into small ideological groups rather than large permanent parties 'characterised by broad general principles' was unsatisfactory: 'They can merely debate, shout one another down, and secure their ends by log-rolling. They lack the faculty for compromise, for give and take, for moderation and modification. In other words, they have not served an apprenticeship in politics; they lack experience and training; they are fumbling amateurs.'[91] Hearnshaw informed his readers that for all its imperfections parliamentary democracy was the best means of government. Hearnshaw appealed to the patriotic consciences of right-wing Conservatives: 'It is the task…of all good citizens in this country to save our parliamentary constitution from destruction at the hands of its foes.'[92]

For the broader conservative public of the *Nineteenth Century and After*, Hearnshaw drew on his academic analysis of Machiavelli from the 1920s to respond to the totalitarian threats of the 1930s.[93] Hearnshaw chose Machiavelli to demonstrate the failures of dictatorship because of his misguided assumptions that 'politics are divorced from ethics, that public and private virtue are things different in kind, and that in national affairs the ends justifies the means'.[94] Hearnshaw's insistence on the importance of closer cooperation between Church and state lay at the heart of his critique of totalitarianism. As Hearnshaw wrote, the state is not primarily power, it is justice, and its ends are moral.[95] In his view, Machiavellism had already been shown to be inadequate as a political doctrine, but despite the 'plainest lessons of history' large sections of the human race were once again determined to put it to the test.[96] If religion provided Hearnshaw with a means of criticising totalitarianism, revolutionary ideas provided him with an additional means of fostering closer religious cooperation between Conservatives and Liberals. When Hearnshaw informed the readers of the *Hibbert Journal* that England was particularly well-suited to an alliance between Church and state it was in contrast to the rest of continental Europe: 'In England it ought to be unusually easy—far easier that it is in Bolshevik Russia, or secularist

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[91] Hearnshaw, 'Safe for democracy', pp. 584-5. Hearnshaw's use of the term 'log-rolling' referred to what he saw as an exchange of political favours such as reciprocal voting in continental European state legislatures.
[92] Ibid., pp. 587-8.
[93] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Niccolo Machiavelli', in F.J.C. Hearnshaw (ed.), *The social and political ideas of some great thinkers of the renaissance and the reformation* (London, 1925). For comment on this earlier work, see Soffer, *History, historians, and conservatism*, pp. 56-57.
[94] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Force and fraud as instruments of policy', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 117 (June 1935), p. 687.
[95] Ibid., pp. 691-2.
[96] Ibid., p. 692.

France, or Fascist Italy, or Hitlerite Germany. For in England, although Parliament has ceased to be a distinctively Anglican, or Protestant, or Christian, or even religious, institution, there is no antagonism whatever between Church and State.'[97] But for the broader liberal readership of the *Contemporary Review*, Hearnshaw criticised dictatorships because they struck at the heart of his ideal of a properly educated society:

> To deprive the citizen of all share in the government of his country is to degrade the standard of citizenship, and to create a passive and servile type of humanity…Already has Germany lost the leadership which she once possessed in the realms of the mind. The Nazi terror hangs like a blight over the whole intellectual horizon.[98]

Therefore, Hearnshaw condemned continental dictatorships on intellectual, political, and religious grounds, but he also channelled his views into more specific criticisms of revolutionary politics at home during the 1930s.

Although his own plans for party political realignment would have resulted in unnecessary electoral risks for the Conservative party, they offered an alternative constitutional politics for those Conservatives and Liberals who were thinking of deserting the National Government and their respective parties. Hearnshaw's articles for the *Contemporary Review* and the *National Review* in the autumn of 1934 were written in response to the BUF's infamous Olympia meeting, which had taken place in June. Lord Rothermere ended his official publicising of the BUF in the *Daily Mail*, but some Conservatives published letters of support for the BUF in national newspapers and the *National Review*.[99] It was under these circumstances that Hearnshaw reaffirmed his commitment to a new Conservative politics, which incorporated sections of the Liberal party.

In the *Contemporary Review*, he assured liberals that the Conservative party would defend the parliamentary system of government and individual freedoms against the threat of

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[97] Hearnshaw, 'Church and state', p. 115.
[98] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Democracy or dictatorship?', *Contemporary Review*, 146 (October 1934), p. 433.
[99] For at least one account documenting Rothermere's continued association with Mosley at a private luncheon after Olympia in January 1935, see N.J. Crowson (ed.), *Fleet street, press barons and politics: the journals of Collin Brooks, 1932-1940*. Camden Fifth Series, Volume 11 (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 80-1. For the most recent take on the events surrounding Olympia, see Martin Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts! Fascists and fascism in Britain between the wars* (London, 2005), pp. 156-76.

the BUF and the Socialist League.[100] Despite Mosley's positive, corporatist, economic policies, the BUF was 'anti-democratic, anti-semitic [sic], anti-socialist, and anti-cosmopolitan' and he argued that it was 'prepared to carry out its policy by means of the doses of castor oil and the other dictatorial devices which proved effective in Cisalpine Gaul twelve years ago'.[101] Cripps, he said, 'takes Lenin as his leader and guide'; the Socialist League would destroy parliamentary government, force through an enabling bill, and crush all remnants of capitalist resistance to its social revolution.[102] Hearnshaw wanted to show a liberal audience that Conservatives shared their fears about the establishment of a dictatorship in Britain and he wanted to present the Conservative party as the only political force capable of mounting an effective political defence on the middle ground. Hearnshaw was even willing to criticise a Conservative member of the National Government to legitimise his appeal:

> There are some who profess to laugh at these threats of dictatorship in Britain. Mr. Ramsbotham, Parliamentary Secretary of the Board of Education, for instance, maintains that they may be treated as "at the best a good joke and at the worst a bad one." He thinks that *Punch* or *Pour Rire* is an adequate prophylactic. "Nothing kills like ridicule," he remarks, "and a French or English caricaturist could quickly put an end to a would-be autocrat." I wish I were as confident as Mr. Ramsbotham. If I were to come to killing quickly, I should back a revolver against ridicule. In all probability before the caricaturist had concocted his destructive cartoon the would-be autocrat would have suppressed his paper and in some way have extinguished him himself.[103]

Hearnshaw drew a different conclusion to that of Ramsbotham, which was more in-keeping with Liberal sensibilities: 'No: the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, and if Great Britain is not to lose its heritage of democratic self-government it must resolutely resist all temptations to take dictatorial short-cuts, even though they are said to lead directly to a people's paradise.'[104]

Simultaneously, Hearnshaw tried to prevent right-wing Conservatives from going over to the BUF by encouraging them to cooperate with Liberals. Here, Hearnshaw was careful not to offend the natural sympathies of right-wing Conservatives because he chose to detail a series of Liberal party 'failures' since the Edwardian period. These included the passage of

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[100] Hearnshaw chose to publish the substance of an address he delivered at the University of Southampton in August 1934.
[101] Hearnshaw, 'Democracy or dictatorship?', pp. 437-8.
[102] Ibid., p. 438.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid., p. 438.

the Trades Disputes Act of 1906, Lloyd George's condoning of the General Strike in 1926, and the party's willingness to put Labour into government in 1924. Hearnshaw wrote, 'since 1906 they have been utterly untrustworthy as guardians of the liberties of the subject, and the rights of the individual'.[105] Only amongst Conservatives would Liberals find an effective 'defence of individual freedom against both Fascist and Socialist dictators'.[106] Again, Hearnshaw outlined an alternative 'middle' ground in direct opposition to the politics of the BUF, which he believed right-wing Conservatives would find more attractive. However, the most interesting aspect of Hearnshaw's appeals to liberal readerships is the way in which his anti-totalitarian rhetoric forced him to admit a preference not just for representative government but for universal suffrage in this period. Hearnshaw had always refused to accept the electoral role of the 'masses' during the early 1930s, but Mosley's brief moment of national publicity and the increasing extremism of Hitler's Nazi party in 1934 convinced him of the need to defend British democracy against dictatorship. This reluctant public acceptance of universal suffrage was shared with the readers of the *Contemporary Review*:

> Probably, in the long run good government and self-government are identical. But in our present imperfect world, with its vast undereducated electorates and its crowds of imperfect politicians, self-government is often far removed from good government. Every extension of the franchise in Great Britain since 1832 has resulted in a degradation of parliament and a weakening of the executive…Nevertheless, if self-government is better than good government the price may have to be paid…The way of democracy, then, is the way of progress, and it must be pursued even though it leads through regions of mortal peril.[107]

At the same time, Hearnshaw admitted that even if dictatorships are 'free from the slowness, the vacillation, the hesitation, the incompetence of an executive dependent upon a popular vote', they are 'out of touch with public opinion', and they are unable to recognise when they are 'outraging the conscience of the community' or 'defying the general will'.[108]

Interestingly, this did not prevent Hearnshaw from using the BUF to pressurise the Conservative leadership into tougher measures against the left once Mosley's star was no longer in the ascendant. In December 1936 Hearnshaw echoed BUF arguments when he criticised the National Government for not taking punitive action against the left's 'undemocratic' political tactics:

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[105] Hearnshaw, 'Liberalism', p. 592.
[106] Ibid., p. 593.
[107] Hearnshaw, 'Democracy or dictatorship?', p. 435.
[108] Ibid., p. 433.

> On the Right, in violent antagonism to the Socialist League and to Communism generally, stands the British Union of Fascists under its militant chief, Sir Oswald Mosley. The unhappy spread of anti-democratic Socialism and Communism in this country rendered the formation of some such body natural if not inevitable. For the existence of revolutionaries who repudiate the democratic method of free discussion, open voting, majority decision, and general obedience, can be countered only by the creation of an opposing force capable of suppressing them by the only means that they recognize and employ. The Fascists are a grave menace to democratic government, but their suppression can be justified only by a democracy that takes over their tasks of defending the elementary rights of free speech against the revolutionary rowdies who are rendering free speech impossible.[109]

Hearnshaw's message was aimed directly at the National Government and the Conservative leadership. He never sympathised with the BUF but like other Conservatives he preferred it to the Socialist League and the British Communist party; like Rothermere he recognised its tactical value in terms of pressurising elite Conservative circles and the National Government to adopt firmer policies.

However, when the Labour party appealed to the police to suppress BUF processions in London's East End, claiming the fascists were stifling democracy, Hearnshaw was not only infuriated, he was also deeply concerned about Labour's potential encroachment on 'Conservative' electoral territory.[110] In March 1937 Hearnshaw explained to right-wing Conservatives how the Labour party, having distanced itself from Cripps and the Socialist League, was now 'professing a novel and most astonishing devotion to Democracy'.[111] It would appear that Hearnshaw recognised the electoral importance of the Conservative claim to be the sole defender of the constitution and parliamentary democracy. He responded by detailing some of the many 'flaws' in Labour's claim to represent the interests of Britain's fledgling democracy:

> In short, until the Labour Party can tolerate freedom of speech; until it can refrain from heresy-hunting; until it can prevent its supporters from breaking up the meetings and the processions of its opponents; until it can secure the respect and obedience of its followers for laws of what they disapprove; until it can convert itself from a sectional into a national party; above all, until it can utterly repudiate the dictatorial weapon of the strike, it should refrain from calling it[self] democratic.[112]

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[109] Hearnshaw, 'Democracy to-day', pp. 725-6.
[110] F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Is the Labour party democratic?', *National Review*, 108 (March 1937), p. 322.
[111] Ibid., p. 317.
[112] Ibid., p. 322.

It was no doubt these concerns that motivated his study *The Paradox of Unemployment: A Utopian Study* (1938), which he never published. Hearnshaw accepted universal suffrage in public because it was preferable to dictatorship in the 1930s, but despite his interest in combating the politics of the left he could never break free from his hierarchical view of society in private. In *The Paradox of Unemployment* Hearnshaw rejected public works, criticised social services, and condemned welfare policies on the basis that they resulted in 'idleness and insolence' amongst the people.[113] Although Soffer finds an increasing paternalism towards the unemployed in Hearnshaw's work, it would seem that on this question he barely changed his thinking in the 1930s. If the unemployed were to be treated as 'members of a national family' and the government was to 'provide them with the "necessities of a moderately comfortable existence"', they were still to be regarded as a Cinderella, stripped of their political rights, and segregated from the more 'meaningful' sections of the national community.[114] Like Marriott, Hearnshaw was an important constitutional and ecumenical voice in the 1930s, but ultimately his ideas helped sustain anachronistic views that would weaken the Conservative party during and after the Second World War. Nevertheless, Hearnshaw did shift ground; he embraced democracy because he wanted to confront the challenges of the BUF and totalitarian politics of left and right during the 1930s.

[113] See Soffer, *History, historians, and conservatism*, p. 75.
[114] Ibid., p. 76.

Chapter Four
Challenging the Economic 'Will-o'-the-Wisp': Hugh Sellon's National Conservatism

Hugh Sellon was probably the most radical mainstream Conservative historian of the 1930s, but little attention has been given to his political ideas. Nor has his active role in Conservative politics been fully recognised. This is hardly surprising because only a handful of private letters relating to Sellon survive. But a scarcity of private sources should not deter us from measuring Sellon's role as a public intellectual in the 1930s. After all, Sellon wrote three important political books during this period, a number of articles for the *Ashridge Journal*, *Empire Review*, *English Review*, and the *Expository Times*, and letters to *The Times*. Sellon was one of the most important advocates of a 'progressive' national Conservatism in the 1930s and he based his political thinking on the idea of a 'property-owning democracy'. He supplied the Conservative party with intellectual arguments that could be used as propaganda against the Labour party, the Socialist League, and the BUF. Sellon built on the foundations of 1920s left-wing Conservative thought and he focussed his attention on the relationship between the individual and the national community. This prompted his interest in the Italian 'Corporate State' throughout the 1930s. Nevertheless, he promoted an ecumenical form of national Conservatism, which strengthened the ability of Baldwin's Conservatism to reach out to voters more naturally inclined towards Liberal or even Labour positions during the 1930s.

The youngest of the Conservative historians, Hugh Sellon was born in 1903 in Acton, Middlesex. He never published his memoirs and left few clues about his family background. The 1911 census returns for England and Wales show that Hugh's father, Anthony Sellon, was born in Herefordshire, while his mother, Hortense Deidesheim, originated from Switzerland (although she identified herself as a French national due to the nature of census categorisation).[1] The census records show that both parents lived according to 'private means' and they identified no professional occupation. However, Anthony's father (Hugh's grandfather) was the Reverend William Sellon, Rector of St Mary's in the parish of

[1] See 1911 Census of England and Wales, Household Schedule 152, Heimat, Maidstone Road, Chatham. Digital image via www.1911census.co.uk (accessed 7 June 2009).

Kentchurch.[2] Therefore, it is likely that Hugh Sellon was raised in an Anglican household. Sellon attended University College, Oxford, where he graduated with a First Class Honours degree in History in 1924. He returned to Oxford the following year as a Bryce Historical Student and was awarded an MA in 1934. His first academic appointment was as Assistant Lecturer (later Lecturer) in History at St Andrews University from 1927 until 1935. He was Lecturer in History and International Relations at the Oxford University Delegacy for Extra-Mural Studies and director of studies at summer meetings and vacation courses for foreign students during 1935-39; he was also a visiting lecturer at several American and Canadian universities throughout 1938.[3] Sellon became the Director of the British Institute in Paris in 1939—a position he held for ten years, despite having to relocate the organisation to Britain after the German invasion of France in May 1940.[4]

Sellon's affiliation with the Conservative party and his connection with influential Conservative figures certainly aided the development of his academic career and his role as a public intellectual in the 1930s. Not only was he an acquaintance of J.A.R. Marriott and F.J.C. Hearnshaw, but he was close to Arthur Bryant. As a result, Sellon was made the principal expert on international affairs at Ashridge College during 1930-39. His lectures often dealt with British foreign policy or Conservative political thought.[5] Many of them were chosen by Bryant for publication in the *Ashridge Journal*.[6] In fact one of the few surviving letters from Sellon is addressed to Bryant and it confirms the nature of their personal and professional relationship: 'I enjoyed my weekend with you immensely. The peace of Claydon [Bryant's residence], after the beastliness of London on a Saturday, was worth coming hundreds of miles to enjoy.' In the same letter, Sellon revealed how he had recently used one of his Ashridge lectures to advance Bryant's proposal for European reform: 'You will perhaps have heard that I gave the lecture! The re-planning of Europe was immensely

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[2] See *The Times*, 17 February 1934.
[3] 'Sellon, Prof. Hugh Gilbert René', *Who Was Who*, A & C Black, 1920–2008; online edn, Oxford University Press, Dec 2007 [http://www.ukwhoswho.com/view/article/oupww/whowaswho/U159444, accessed 8 June 2009].
[4] Hugh Sellon, 'The collapse of France', *Empire Review and Magazine*, 72 (October 1940), pp. 216-8.
[5] Sellon's most active period at Ashridge was between 1930 and 1934. For regular advertising of lecture courses that included Sellon, see numerous issues of the *Ashridge Journal*, 3-19 (August 1930-September 1934).
[6] Hugh Sellon, 'England and Europe', *Ashridge Journal*, 4 (November 1930), pp. 6-16; 'The river of Conservatism', *Ashridge Journal*, 7 (August 1931), pp. 11-26; 'Political and economic issues in Europe', *Ashridge Journal*, 10 (June 1932), pp. 8-22; 'The corporate state', *Ashridge Journal*, 16 (September 1933), pp. 11-25; 'Action and reaction in Europe', *Ashridge Journal*, 19 (September 1934), pp. 42-53.

popular and it was clear to me that when I disclaimed all responsibility for and belief in the plan, and said it was Mr. Bryant's scheme, the students were thereby convinced of its superior value to my own more modest suggestions.'[7] Sellon was engaging in an element of flattery here because his own plans for the re-ordering of Europe were more idiosyncratic for a Conservative historian in the 1930s.

Sellon's role at Ashridge and his relationship with Bryant meant that he was well-known amongst prominent Conservatives, especially those close to the party leadership. The former Conservative party Chairman and Baldwin confidant, J.C.C. Davidson, recorded in his private correspondence that 'Sellon has taken charge of several courses there [Ashridge].' Davidson also revealed that Sellon was considered for the position of Director of the BBC in Scotland.[8] Although the appointment was never made, Davidson's disclosure underlines Conservative concerns about influencing the BBC in the 1930s. In fact, John Reith recorded in his diary that Baldwin recommended Sellon for an even greater role at the BBC at this time. This was the newly created position of Controller (of programmes) and the successful applicant (Alan Dawnay) became second-in-command to Reith, overseeing all programmes, talks, publicity, and publications, as well as the empire and foreign services.[9] Evidently those at the heart of the party saw Sellon as a potential vehicle for Conservative propaganda—an idea developed below—but it is also true that he had immediate political ambitions of his own.

Sellon was an active Conservative party member. He was one of twenty Conservatives on the Eastern Divisional Council of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association in December 1933. It is likely that he was chosen because of his literary contributions and his educational work both at Ashridge and St Andrews. It was recorded in the Council's minutes that the number of places on the Council was strictly limited and its members were particularly keen on 'obtaining the co-operation of the specialised services of certain individuals'. At the same meeting, the Council's members were greatly concerned about

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[7] Hugh Sellon to Arthur Bryant, 22 August (1932?), Kings College London, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Arthur Bryant papers, C52.

[8] J.C.C. Davidson to anonymous correspondent (possibly Stanley Baldwin), March 1933, London, House of Lords Record Office, Parliamentary Archives, John Campbell Davidson papers, DAV/20114.

[9] Charles Stuart (ed.), *The Reith diaries* (London, 1975), p. 157, entry for 13 March 1933. Baldwin nominated the Cambridge historian Kenneth Pickthorn, Hugh Sellon and S.C. Roberts (Head of Cambridge University Press) for the job through his Private Secretary Geoffrey Fry. See also Asa Briggs, *The golden age of the wireless* (Oxford, 1995 edn.), pp. 411-3.

political education and propaganda: 'Colonel Blair [Political Secretary to the Chairman of the Unionist party in Scotland] spoke on the necessity of continuous political education in the constituencies.'[10] Sellon's involvement with Scottish Conservatism impacted greatly on his political ideas, but it was also part of his strategy to become a Conservative MP. *The Times* reported that Sellon was approached to stand as a Unionist candidate at the East Fife by-election in 1933, but he was forced to withdraw in favour of the National Liberal candidate, J. Henderson Stewart. Sellon's name was mentioned again as a potential independent Conservative candidate for the Scottish Universities in January 1936. Although Sellon confirmed he was in negotiations with the Scottish Universities to become a Unionist candidate in support of the National Government, he was forced to withdraw because the Conservative party leadership agreed to support Ramsay MacDonald instead.[11] Despite Sellon's failure to become a Conservative MP, the nature of his work put him in close contact with influential Conservatives, journalists, and publicists, including: L.S. Amery, A.D. Cochrane, Walter Elliot, Harold Goad, Douglas Jerrold, Charles Petrie, Noel Skelton, and Arnold Wilson. Sellon's involvement with the Conservative party also continued after the Second World War. He was one of the main contributors to Conservative Political Centre's *Tradition and Change* in 1954.[12]

Reinvigorating Democracy and National Conservatism

Sellon's Conservatism drew on the political ideas of a small number of influential Conservative figures and the corporatist policies of Fascist Italy. As a result, he was far more radical than Bryant, Hearnshaw, or Marriott. Sellon's Conservatism came closest to reflecting the sentiment of Baldwin's National politics in the 1930s, but like other

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[10] Minute Books of the Eastern Divisional Council, Scottish Unionist Association, 13 December 1933, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Acc.10424/43. Throughout 1934 the Council recognised the importance of political education for Conservative supporters, which was being offered at Ashridge College. It was particularly keen to raise money for more scholarships for Conservative constituents to attend. However, at the same time the Council recognised the importance of Conservative party propaganda against Labour in Scotland. As a result, it was keen to make extensive use of pamphlets and other paraphernalia issued by Conservative Central Office.

[11] *The Times*, 11 January 1936.

[12] See *Nine Oxford lectures: tradition and change* (Conservative Political Centre, 1954), Oxford, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive, PUB 165/18. The other eight Conservative contributors were R.A. Butler, T.E. Utley, J. Enoch Powell, Olive Lloyd-Baker, Iain Macleod, Angus Maude, Edward Boyle, and Christopher Hollis. Sellon's contribution was 'Peace with Honour'.

Conservatives on the left of the party he refused to rely on political education and patriotic rhetoric to persuade a new electorate of the value of constitutional Conservatism. Sellon wanted the state to encourage further integration between Britain's new electorate and its existing capitalist structures. He also urged Conservatives to embark upon a series of constitutional reforms to democratise society and the party political system. Despite Sellon's interest in Mussolini and the Italian 'Corporate State', it was Conservative ideas that dominated his thinking, not fascist ones, which explains why his political message was consistently promoted by CCO throughout 1934.

Sellon outlined some of the key features of his Conservatism in an article for the *Expository Times* in April 1931.[13] Sellon's role at St Andrews and his interest in Scottish Conservatism was no doubt responsible for his decision to publish in the periodical. He wanted to persuade religious leaders of the value of a national, community based politics, as opposed to internationalist thinking, which he associated with the 'socialist pacifism' of the League of Nations. Sellon rejected the idea that it was possible to reconstruct civil society along internationalist lines because it would be an artificial imposition; it would be 'inorganic':

> a nation is not the outcome of a deliberate act impelled by utilitarian considerations, which can consequently be modified or abolished in response to the demands of new political or economic conditions. A nation is not only the instrument whereby men enjoy material prosperity and safety, it is the outcome as well as the expression of the most intimate and sacred instincts and emotions of the people who make up its body politic.[14]

Sellon's message was delivered at a time when public confidence was low in the British economy and parliamentary institutions. Although rumours of a National Government were not expected to bare fruit in April 1931, Sellon was already well-disposed to the idea.[15] He believed in the importance of religious instruction throughout the country and he identified preachers or clergymen as potential advocates of national Conservatism in local communities.

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[13] The *Expository Times* was founded by a minister of the United Free Church in 1899 and it remains an influential organ of opinion amongst Scottish preachers today. Its mission is to bridge the gap between the latest developments in theological scholarship and the practicalities of public worship.

[14] Hugh Sellon, 'Some moral problems of to-day—X. Patriotism', *Expository Times*, 42 (April 1931), p. 313.

[15] On the debate about a potential coalition government during this period see Philip Williamson, *National crisis and National Government. British politics, the economy and empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge, 1992), particularly pp. 133-62, 229-52.

Sellon detailed the principles of his national Conservatism for the *Ashridge Journal* in August 1931.[16] Like Hearnshaw, Sellon believed in the virtues of a meritocratic capitalist society, based on the natural communitarian instincts resulting from a 'property-owning democracy'.[17] As Sellon explained, 'an attack on the institution of private property inevitably constitutes an attack on the most essential institution in the community—the family'. He argued that concern for one's family encouraged feelings of self-sacrifice rather than selfishness and aggressiveness, which made private property a stabilising force in society.[18] Sellon rejected socialism because he considered attacks on private property to be genuine threats to society. As Sellon wrote, 'society is, after all, contractual in nature, though the contract may be tacit and undefined'.[19] If the contract were to be broken extremist politics might prevail. For this reason, Sellon saw problems of unemployment and foreign policy as temporary issues, albeit ones of great importance, and he warned Conservatives not to be distracted from their underlying political principles: 'The winds of political chance and change play on the surface of the life of the Conservative Party, and we have to look below that stormy surface to where the current of political principles flows clear and strong, and will continue to flow, long after the surface storms have spent their force and have been forgotten.'[20]

Sellon's warning-call was also based on another core Conservative principle—the guaranteeing of national stability through the safeguarding of British institutions. He drew distinctions between Conservative ideas and those of the 'typical Radical'. He criticised those who believed in the revolutionising of political institutions: '[T]he destruction of institutions whose roots run deep into the fabric of the nation may weaken the nation to a dangerous extent.'[21] Sellon believed strongly in the preservation of different national institutions because they provided the constitutional checks and balances needed to prevent 'political tyranny', which he considered 'an essential object of Conservatism'.[22] But like Edmund Burke he was not against the evolution of national institutions to meet new world conditions: 'It is not the form of an institution that the Conservative is so anxious to

[16] This was based on Sellon's lectures at Ashridge throughout 15-27 June, 17-29 August, and 14-26 September 1931. See *Ashridge Journal*, 6-7 (May-August 1931).
[17] Sellon, 'The river of Conservatism', pp. 13-15.
[18] Ibid., p. 16.
[19] Ibid., p. 17.
[20] Ibid., p. 12.
[21] Ibid., pp. 17-18.
[22] Ibid., p. 18.

preserve, but the spirit which gives life to the form and for which the form exists.'[23] This outlook motivated his plans for the reforming of the British constitution. He thought Conservatives were neglecting their constitutional duty if they insisted on retaining a hereditary House of Lords at the expense of re-balancing the constitution after the implementation of the Parliament Act of 1911. Sellon argued the French Senate was the most admirable upper chamber in existence and he suggested Conservatives move to adopt similar proposals: 'For the transforming of the House of Lords into a modern Senate would be less revolutionary than a continuance of the system under which we are now living, which system—by depriving the Upper House of all real power—establishes a Second Chamber [Commons] autocracy entirely foreign to all traditions of British public life.'[24]

These constitutional arguments were expanded upon in Sellon's first major work *Whither, England*. The book was published in 1932 and it was endorsed by the Conservative MP Walter Elliot who wrote a brief note of introduction. Elliot regarded the book as 'an example of the continuous process of revision of our traditional economic philosophy and politics which is going on throughout the length and breadth of the Conservative movement to-day'.[25] Interestingly, Sellon wrote the book in the style of letters addressed to fictional Conservative opponents or sympathisers (for example, to a socialist politician, a communist friend, or a Tory). But in two chapters on national institutions, Sellon detailed the principal differences between the Radical and Conservative view of the British constitution. He suggested Britain's reformed House of Lords be composed of 'all the best and most respected interests in the country' to ensure 'it would no longer lay itself open to the charge of being a privileged and reactionary institution'. The majority of the House of Lords would be made up of Peers of the First Creation and Life Peers without recourse to hereditary rights. He wanted to retain representatives from the Church of England, but other religious faiths would be represented: including members of the Catholic Church, Free Churches, Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and the Chief Rabbi. In addition to Law Lords, 'retired Ambassadors, Viceroys, the Governor of the Bank of England, the heads of the great joint-stocks banks, representatives of the Universities, and—and this I consider most important—the Prime Ministers of the Dominions, and—if possible—a number of the members of the

[23] Sellon, 'The river of Conservatism', p. 20.
[24] Ibid., p. 21.
[25] Hugh Sellon, *Whither, England? The letters of a Conservative* (London, 1932), p. v. Walter Elliot's ideas are explored in Chapter Six.

Dominion legislatures' would be made members, or at least *ex-officio* members of the House. He also insisted that trade unions be represented because he was worried about it being seen as a class institution. Sellon urged the King to promote large numbers of Labour leaders to life or hereditary peerages to ensure strong working-class participation in the legislature. Ministers of the Crown would also be allowed to speak but not vote in either House because he argued the practice instilled the Upper House with more legislative authority.[26]

Other constitutional reforms were aimed at reducing the power of the Executive, which included the introduction of fixed-term parliaments: 'Such a custom would put far more power into the hands of the ordinary member, since a Government that no longer met the real wishes of Parliament could be removed from office, without the risk of a General Election.'[27] He reasoned that it would be more democratic and 'preferable to have the possibility of a certain degree of ministerial instability, rather than the possible alternatives of a virtual suppression of the freedom of Parliament or the disturbance and expense of a General Election'.[28] Sellon was also concerned about the power of party whips and, like Marriott, he recognised the worrying tendency of Ministers to transfer powers from Parliament to Whitehall.[29] He proposed two solutions to deal with these problems, and legislative congestion: first, the introduction of a new system of parliamentary committees and, second, a scheme outlining the devolution of some parliamentary work to regional assemblies. Sellon believed committees of experts or MPs interested in specific areas of government would help to empower Parliament because MPs would be better qualified to modify government policy—the current position of relying on the 'undisciplined revolt of back benchers' was deemed unsatisfactory.[30] However, although Sellon did argue for provincial assemblies and commissions of experts to deal with local problems and questions requiring technical knowledge, he did not envisage a transfer of parliamentary power from Westminster—all of these solutions were to be 'subject to parliamentary approval before becoming law'.[31]

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[26] Sellon, *Whither, England*, pp. 188-9.
[27] Sellon was influenced by the recent conduct of Liberal MPs who had refused to abandon the previous Labour government in the spring of 1931.
[28] Sellon, *Whither, England*, p. 191.
[29] Ibid., p. 193.
[30] Ibid., p. 192.
[31] Ibid., p. 194.

Sellon's diagnosis of the ills of British democracy included the means of selecting parliamentary candidates: 'The present way in which many constituencies are virtually put up to auction to the highest bidder is little short of a national scandal, and I am afraid that the Conservative Party is very largely guilty of this offence.'[32] Sellon argued in favour of the payment of MPs expenses by the state because he believed it allowed talent to dictate selection rather than wealth. He suggested an Act of Parliament be passed in addition to the Corrupt Practices Act to prevent candidates from contributing to their local associations. To what extent these views were formed out of personal frustration we do not know, but clearly he judged that the current party system tarnished the image of British democracy in the country. He wrote 'as long as the present system lasts, it will be a negation of true democracy, it will expose politics to the accusation of being a game of dubious morality, it will bar most young men and many older men of ability from Parliament, and it will continue to contribute to the present decline of the House of Commons in general usefulness and in public esteem'.[33] Sellon's constitutional arguments were not based entirely on party political considerations, though these were important. He was genuinely concerned about the British public's perception of parliamentary democracy in a new age of universal suffrage, even if he wanted a national Conservative bloc to prosper within a reformed parliamentary system.

Sellon devoted much of his book to sustaining the National Conservative bloc. In a letter 'To a Tory', Sellon tried to persuade Conservative readers of the benefits of a 'property-owning democracy'. He appealed to two of their fondest sensibilities, money and 'national character'. He made the idea appear financially lucrative for the wealthier members of the party by arguing that it would help entrench their current position in society, but he was also forcing them to accept universal suffrage in the process:

> It is grotesque that out of an electorate of 29,523,692 the total number of persons paying direct taxation should be only about 3,750,000…It is merely foolish to suggest that the principle of universal suffrage can be abandoned or modified. It is only partially helpful to suggest that education may make the 25,773,692 non-income-tax-paying electors realise how vitally concerned they are in the prosperity of the 3,750,000 direct-tax payers. It is essential to broaden the basis of property-owning in this country, to increase the number of people who realise that they have a stake in the existing institutions and economic organisation of England, and to make England completely into what she now is only partially—a property-owning democracy.[34]

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[32] Sellon, *Whither, England*, p. 199.
[33] Ibid., p. 201.
[34] Ibid., p. 158.

Sellon also suggested that the character of industrial and agricultural workers would be raised if they experienced property ownership.[35] Sellon valued the concept of a 'property-owning democracy' because he believed it neutralised socialism and the intellectual foundations of the parliamentary Labour party, but equally it was an attempt to strike a compromise between the upper and lower strata of society and to entrench democratic values at a time of revolutionary upheaval abroad. Sellon's ideas are an important bridge between radical Conservative arguments in the 1920s and the housing policies of Conservative governments in the 1950s. Sellon's Conservatism reinforces John Ramsden's argument that Conservative thinking was subject to 'cumulative and gradual change' between the interwar years and 1964.[36]

If Conservatives needed persuading of the value of national Conservatism, then so did Liberals. Sellon appealed specifically to middle-class businessmen who he thought were liable to political apathy, but who could nevertheless bolster the ranks of the National Conservative bloc. Sellon explained that there was no longer any significant conflict between Conservative and old Liberal supporters: 'In so far as Liberals support the freedom of the individual and the sacredness of individual effort and enterprise, they are at one with Conservatives. The difference between Liberals and Conservatives is in most matters a difference of emphasis, and not of principle.'[37] He affirmed that Liberalism as a party political force was dead: 'In so far as it worked for the triumph of democratic ideas, its work was accomplished when the principle of universal suffrage was accepted.' In his opinion Liberalism could no longer be distinguished from Conservatism:

> All that inspired it in the past, all that gave it life and fire, has become the common possession of both Liberals and Conservatives. And it is probable that the future will see the majority of Liberals transferring their allegiance to the Conservative Party, thus bringing an infusion of new blood into it, while the Liberals of the Left Wing will, by joining the Socialist Party, create a new Socialist Right Wing which will be of inestimable service to the State by acting as a brake upon the more dangerous elements in Socialism.[38]

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[35] Sellon, *Whither, England*, p. 160.
[36] John Ramsden, '"A party for owners or a party for earners?" How far did the British Conservative party really change after 1945?', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Fifth Series*, 37 (London, 1987), pp. 57-63.
[37] Sellon, *Whither, England*, pp. 33-5.
[38] Ibid., pp. 35-6.

This view of party political realignment reflected some of Hearnshaw's sympathies, but it was much more in accord with the outlook of Baldwin who hoped for the realisation of two national, and constitutional, parties competing on the middle ground of British politics.[39] As Sellon confirmed 'Conservatism will have to base itself on a wider political platform than before, and seek allies from all sources that are not tainted with the doctrines of State Socialism. The Conservatism of the future will be a compound, not only of the old Toryism, but also of progressive Liberalism and of constitutional Labour'.[40]

Corporatism and Economic Organisation

Sellon recognised the ideals of a 'property-owning democracy' in British theories of industrial co-partnership and the Italian 'Corporate State'. In a series of letters addressed to trade union leaders, Sellon responded to socialist criticisms of the capitalist system and the private ownership of industry. He tried to soften-up socialist readers by recognising the ill-treatment of industrial workers in the nineteenth century: 'When I meet violently reactionary Conservatives who profess themselves unable to understand why there should be any Socialism in England…I wish that I could persuade them to spend a few days in studying the industrial history of this country when the industrial revolution was in its infancy.'[41] Sellon argued most of Britain's current economic problems were based either on mistakes made in the past or on 'world-causes over which we have had little or no control'.[42] He conceded that manufacturers could not be absolved from all blame for the decline of British industry, but he insisted that the present economic organisation of society was functional and highly competitive. Sellon explained that Britain's monopoly of the world export trade had ended, but she remained the third largest exporter. He judged the survival of the British industrial system under such difficult conditions to be proof of its enduring health. He wrote, 'those who seek to remedy our industrial troubles by nationalisation are following an economic will-o'-the-wisp'.[43]

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[39] Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin. Conservative leadership and national values* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 152.
[40] Sellon, *Whither, England*, pp. 203-4.
[41] Ibid., p. 94.
[42] Ibid., p. 105.
[43] Ibid., p. 108.

Sellon's interest in the Italian 'Corporate State' stemmed mainly from his attempts to convince socialists of the value of existing economic and political institutions. As he explained to trade unionists, corporations made up of associations of workman and associations of employers, like those in Italy, would lead to the diplomatic settling both of wage disputes and claims for better working conditions. Sellon rejected the idea that corporations would have to be based on the Italian model, but he did insist that they be 'run in the same spirit of co-operation, a spirit which has been given too little expression to by the industrial and labour leaders of post-war England'.[44] Sellon proposed a National Industrial Council composed of the leaders of the joint Unions of employers and workers (who together represented individual corporations), leaders in the world of trade and finance, and members appointed by the government. The Council would be chaired by a Minister of Commerce who would rank second only to the Prime Minister. Depending on its success, the Council might be institutionalised and admitted to the constitution, but it would not replace the House of Lords as the legitimate Upper Chamber. Until corporations had proven themselves they would be subject to strict parliamentary control.[45]

Undoubtedly, sacrifices had to be made to implement this corporatist vision of a more harmonious society and Sellon did not hide the realities of his scheme from trade unionists: 'The strike and the lock-out must be declared illegal, and such an outrage on a civilised community as picketing must be forbidden under the most drastic penalties. If it is said that this is an extension of State interference, and an attack on the freedom of employers and employed, I am quite indifferent.'[46] Although Sellon was attempting to spread the cost of corporatism it is fairly obvious that workers had most to lose from the plan because government representatives would be responsible for settling disputes between employers and workers. This heavy-handed approach towards the workers was evident in his attitude to solving unemployment:

> [I]t is time that we abandoned such ridiculous nonsense as that which recently impelled an acquaintance of mine to reproach me for hard-heartedness and an indifference to the rights of the workers, when I suggested that the boys and younger men, unemployed in the older industries, should be encouraged to migrate to other parts of the country if there was any chance of their finding in the new industries.[47]

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[44] Sellon, *Whither, England*, p. 133.
[45] Ibid., pp. 133-4.
[46] Ibid., p. 132.
[47] Ibid., p. 120.

Those who refused to accept an offer of employment elsewhere in the country would face 'the loss of all unemployment grants' and be subject 'to any repressive measures that might be approved by Parliament'.[48] Sellon explained his plans in slightly more generous terms in a letter to a Tory: 'The workers must be made to feel that they have a personal stake in the progress of the industry to which they belong, and it is hard to see how this can be brought about except by the gradual adoption by industrial undertakings of the principle of co-partnership.'[49] Sellon was also mindful of the small producer, whose future welfare was a common concern amongst right-wing critics of corporatist schemes in the 1930s: 'I do not accept the widespread belief that the only sound rationalising of industry is by the destruction of the small producer and the triumph of the big combine. Far better will be leagues or associations of small producers, retaining their independence, but voluntarily subject to concerted schemes of grading, marketing, and advertising.'[50] Sellon saw in corporatist and co-partnership schemes a means of safeguarding civil liberties and retaining high levels of individual initiative in industry, but as he recognised a price would be paid: 'This check on individual freedom in industry is necessary if individual freedom is to survive'.[51] Sellon believed his concern for the individual and the capitalist work ethic made him a Conservative, but he argued that he had much in common with socialists. He admitted to trade unionists, 'I do not know whether you will look upon my views on these matters as Conservative or Socialist, and I confess that I am indifferent in this matter.'[52]

Italian Fascism and the Corporate State

Although Sellon was keen to capitalise on the popularity of Italian corporatist ideas in Conservative circles, he distanced himself from political commentators who wanted to transplant Italian Fascism into Britain. In a 1933 Ashridge lecture, Sellon spelled out the limitations of what could be learned from the Italian model. Sellon was keen to sympathise with young Conservatives who were attracted to Fascism, but he proceeded to undermine particular aspects of its ideology. He was genuinely impressed with the performance of the

[48] Sellon, *Whither, England*, p. 121.
[49] Ibid., p. 160.
[50] Ibid., p. 169.
[51] Ibid., p. 134.
[52] Ibid., p. 135.

Italian 'Corporate State', which he argued had been in operation for over ten years.[53] He recognised a number of Conservative principles in its approach to economic organisation. As he remarked, 'it presents an especially impressive appearance in that it is not a rigid and unchanging political structure, but one that enjoys sufficient strength and vitality to be continually evolving new institutions and adapting old ones to the ever-changing conditions of its national life'.[54] 'Conservatism has always', he insisted, 'proclaimed the Corporate nature of the State'. Sellon was not blindly accepting the Italian model here; rather he was keen to stress the important role of the state in regulating the excesses of the economic and political life of the nation. In Sellon's view a Christian state could not allow unrestricted economic freedom because this led to the suppression of the weakest strata of society. To legitimise this argument he drew upon the legend of Disraeli: 'Some of my readers will condemn me for giving utterance to what they may consider to be Socialist doctrine. But I would ask them to remember that the British statesman who first really gave his attention to the restriction of economic freedom was the greatest Conservative of modern England.'[55]

One of the key differences between Sellon's corporatism and that of fascists like Mosley was his insistence on it being an organic growth from below rather than a revolutionary imposition from above. Sellon saw corporatism as a return to a more liberal form of the old trade guild of the middle ages, combining 'the Christian spirit of service with the classical and Renaissance ideal of material freedom'.[56] The corporate state, Sellon argued, 'must come by reorganisation of industry from within. But the State must take the initiative in bringing about such reorganisation, and it must supervise and control it'.[57] Nevertheless, Sellon's form of corporatism was evolutionary and he left room for possible failure. If

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[53] This was not strictly true. See Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism 1915-1945* (London, 2004), pp. 105-107. Morgan argues that the foundation-stone of the Italian 'Corporate State' was the so-called Palazzo-Vidoni pact of October 1925, which formalised proposals set-out in the Palazzo-Chigi agreement of 1923. Alfredo Rocco's April 1926 law on the judicial regulation of labour relations finally wrote the agreement into the institutional structures of the Fascist state. Even then, 'The law allowed but did not oblige the setting up of fledgling corporations as "organs of co-ordination" of the syndical associations. This was perhaps enough to suggest that a corporative system was in the making. But the facility to form corporations was never actually exercised nor contemplated by industrial employers, before the legal creation of corporations in 1934'. The Italian 'Corporate State' barely got off the ground and it was dictated to by the Fascist regime. Most British Conservatives failed to appreciate this fact at the time.

[54] Sellon, 'The corporate state', pp. 12-13.

[55] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[56] Ibid., p. 19.

[57] Ibid., p. 20.

industry rejected corporatist solutions or they could not be made to work then corporatism would have to be abandoned. He recognised the pitfalls of the Italian 'Corporate State', most notably its reliance on Mussolini and the rule of the Italian Fascist party:

> If he were to vanish, if his representative no longer presided over the deliberations of the National Council of Corporations, above all—if, by some shocking calamity, Fascism were to fall—then it is uncertain whether separatist and individualist forces within the Syndicates and Corporations might not, in time, weaken the corporate organisation of Italian industry and bring it to the ground.[58]

The concept of revolutionary constitutional change had no currency with Sellon because it would have made most of his Conservative principles redundant. He accepted Mussolini's 'March on Rome' because he viewed Italy's liberal constitution as a foreign imposition that had failed the Italian people. The British constitution was 'the outcome of a thousand years of slow growth', it was 'the outward expression of the very nature of our people', and economic and political reform 'must take place within the framework of this constitution'.[59] Sellon considered supporters of Mosley and the BUF to be 'foolish and dangerous', and he accused them of poisoning the chalice of corporatist thought, which he believed 'could be applied by any strong government, whether Fascist, democratic, or aristocratic'.[60]

Sellon was interested in lasting political change and he saw dictatorship as a short-cut that could not be sustained. Individual freedoms and civil liberties were vital to his Conservatism even if on occasion he was willing to curtail them for the good of the community: 'The more freedom those members enjoy, provided that such freedom does not degenerate into licence, the stronger will their souls be, and the surer shield will they become in the hour of national peril and disaster.'[61] For this reason alone, he chose to support Baldwin's view of the relationship between the individual and the state rather than the views of prominent Italian Fascists and German Nazis or their British sympathisers. Quoting Baldwin, Sellon praised the spirit, character, thrift, and hard work of the individual.[62] Sellon prioritised the individual soul because he sensed the nation could not succeed without it, which is why he was not willing to completely subordinate the individual to the state or one political party—a notable feature of interwar fascist movements.

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[58] Sellon, 'The corporate state', p. 20.
[59] Ibid., p. 21.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., p. 24.
[62] Ibid., p. 25.

But why was Sellon's Conservatism important in the 1930s? If we compare his arguments to those of the historian Charles Petrie, a member of the Conservative party who also lectured at Ashridge and who wrote a steady stream of political books and articles praising Fascist Italy, it becomes clear that Sellon's was an important constitutional voice, consistently challenging sympathy for fascism in Conservative circles. Sellon's letter to a Tory in his book *Whither, England* may well have been directed at Petrie or at least at those Conservatives who thought like him. It was also no coincidence that Bryant chose to publish back-to-back articles by Petrie and Sellon in the *Ashridge Journal* in September 1933. This was a public ideological debate between Conservatives and it was being facilitated by Bryant at Ashridge. Petrie considered himself a Tory not a Conservative, which was an important distinction at the time. He considered 'Individualism in the State, and nationalism in the world' to be Liberal doctrines born of the French Revolution. Britain required 'a "planned" State and, within certain broad limits, a "planned" world, based upon a definite set of principles'.[63] As Petrie argued, 'The Liberal doctrine that the national interest is the sum of the interests of the individuals composing the nation finds no place in the Tory creed. That theory was invented in the heyday of the Industrial Revolution to justify the exploitation of the working classes by their Liberal masters.'[64] This view of the relationship between the individual and the nation did not fit Sellon's Conservatism. Sellon rejected the idea that the nation was an artificial construction—the sum of all individual interests—but he held out for a workable compromise between the individual and the nation. Sellon wanted to integrate nineteenth century Liberalism with old-fashioned Toryism because he believed it would strengthen a permanent national Conservatism—Petrie, on the other hand, refused to make such a compromise.

Petrie had already publicised his views on what form the British constitution should take in his book *Monarchy*. He wanted to transplant the Italian 'Corporate State' into Britain, but its figurehead was to be the King who would regularly attend cabinet meetings and resume control of government affairs.[65] As Claudia Baldoli has shown in her work on Italian émigrés, Petrie was in regular contact with Dino Grandi, the Italian Ambassador in London

[63] Charles Petrie, 'A Tory looks at his world', *Ashridge Journal*, 16 (September 1933), p. 9.
[64] Ibid., p. 10.
[65] Charles Petrie, *Monarchy* (London, 1933), p. 293.

during the 1930s; a relationship he sustained after the Second World War.[66] More importantly, Petrie was President of the British delegation of the *Comitati d'Azione per l'Universalità di Roma* (CAUR), the failed Italian Fascist attempt to sponsor a fascist Europe based on the 'universality of Rome'.[67] Although Petrie often appeared to be against dictatorship, insisting that it was unrealistic to produce a brand new constitution and suggesting the corporate state be fitted into existing constitutional structures, such sentiment was misleading because he wanted to destroy most of the constitutional innovations of the past two hundred years. He completely rejected democracy:

> Now that it has failed in such disastrous circumstances, the engines must be reversed. To restrict the franchise once more would be to encounter the opposition of the democratic diehards quite needlessly for all that is necessary is, while leaving the irresponsible multitude with its votes, to ensure that the latter shall be valueless, and so powerless for harm.[68]

Petrie did not recognise major differences between a pre-democratic monarchical Britain and a modern Fascist Italy. For this reason, he also rejected the BUF as unnecessary.[69]

These views were anathema to Sellon who preferred a conservative response to the economic and constitutional innovations of the Italian 'Corporate State'. Although Petrie's views were debated by Conservatives they were often carefully counterbalanced with constitutional alternatives. This was important because it helped stifle the progress of unconstitutional ideas amongst high-ranking Conservatives and their supporters. Sellon was certainly on the fringes of the *English Review* group, but the nature of his ideas demonstrates that there were insurmountable differences even amongst the group's own members.[70] One historian claims the polarising affect of the debate surrounding the Government of India bill in the early 1930s prevented further collaboration between members of the *English Review* group and other mainstream figures from both the left and right of the Conservative party

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[66] Claudia Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism. Italian Fascists and Britain's Italians in the 1930s* (Oxford, 2003), p. 102.
[67] Ibid., pp. 57-8.
[68] Petrie, *Monarchy*, pp. 294-5.
[69] Ibid., p. 10. Petrie's outlook conflicted with Marriott's analysis. Marriott historicised modern Italian Fascist politics and seventeenth century British politics, interpreting them as primitive stages of national development compared with Britain's revered modern parliamentary democracy.
[70] On the *English Review* luncheon club, see Charles Petrie, *Chapters of life* (London, 1950), pp. 129-32. Douglas Jerrold, Charles Petrie, and Arnold Wilson were all members and proof of their association with Sellon exists in the form of a co-signed letter to *The Times*, 6 December 1935. All four men signed the letter in protest against League of Nations sanctions against Italy over the Abyssinian dispute.

who supported more radical plans for domestic reconstruction.[71] But this view is surely too simplistic. The Group was split by fundamental constitutional and economic differences, and it is unlikely these would have been overcome even without the disruption of the controversy surrounding the India bill. This is best demonstrated by Douglas Jerrold's review of Sellon's book *Whither England*. Jerrold praised Sellon's emphasis on the distribution of property as a means of ensuring economic stability, but crucially he rejected Sellon's co-partnership and profit-sharing schemes (thereby also distancing himself from his ally Petrie).[72]

Scottish Conservatism and Constitutional Propaganda

Sellon acknowledged the influence of Petrie and another authority on the Italian 'Corporate State', Harold Goad, on *Whither, England*.[73] But he also acknowledged the support of Arthur Bryant and the powerful influence of Scottish Conservative traditions on his political thought. His proximity to 'progressive', reform-minded Scottish Conservative MPs shaped his approach to corporatist politics. Noel Skelton, A.D. Cochrane, and the staff of the Scottish Unionist Office in Edinburgh, played a major role in determining his views on industrial matters.[74] And like Walter Elliot, the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture, he favoured an evolutionary approach to the introduction of corporatist agricultural schemes, based on the needs of individual sectors, as and when required. Although Sellon's book was written too early to deal directly with Elliot's agricultural marketing schemes, the two men shared similar views of economic reorganisation—hence Elliot's invitation to write the introduction to *Whither, England*.[75]

Skelton, Cochrane, and Elliot debated these issues regularly in the 1920s and early 1930s. Skelton, of course, was the most important reference for Conservatives who were interested in the idea of a 'property-owning democracy'—a term he popularised—but also

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[71] William Robert Gordon Frame, 'The Conservative party and domestic reconstruction, 1931-35' (unpublished PhD thesis: Royal Holloway; University of London, 1999), p. 158.
[72] See Douglas Jerrold, *English Review*, 56 (January 1933), p. 8.
[73] Harold Goad was an author/ journalist and the director of the British Institute in Florence between 1922 and 1939. See Harold Goad, *What is Fascism?* (Florence, 1929); and, *The making of the corporate state* (London, 1932). Also, Harold Goad and Muriel Currey (eds), *The working of a corporate state* (London, 1933). Walter Elliot wrote a forward for the latter.
[74] Sellon, *Whither, England*, p. vii.
[75] Elliot's corporatist ideas and policies are discussed in Chapter Six.

industrial co-partnership, which he did most to promote in the 1920s.[76] Skelton's four articles published in *The Spectator* throughout 1923, entitled 'Constructive Conservatism', were highly influential within the Conservative party, as were his other articles, 'Labour in the new era' and 'The safeguarding of British democracy', which were published in the *Quarterly Review* and *English Review* some years later.[77] Skelton was MP for the Scottish Universities as well as parliamentary Under-Secretary for Scotland between 1931 and 1935. Suffering from a number of illnesses in this period he contributed little to public debate, although he continued to attend party conferences and Scottish Conservative meetings.[78] But Sellon's thinking probably owed most to Skelton's Conservatism. As Skelton wrote in July 1926,

> Have not democratic institutions proved their practical workaday value in the severest of tests—a gigantic world-war and, this very year, an intense domestic peril? For in both, the people of Britain showed very plainly that, in their view, it was their own duty, and not merely their Government's, to overcome the danger. And they have shown too that democratic institutions can produce an executive as firm, as alert, as courageous as any authoritarian State, be it Bolshevik or Fascist.[79]

The same sentiment exists in Sellon's work, but unlike Skelton he did not adopt the referendum as the means of reinvigorating democracy. Instead, Sellon relied on the re-distribution of power in Parliament and co-partnership or corporatist schemes of economic

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[76] For a discussion of Skelton's work in the 1920s and that of Harold Macmillan and other young Conservatives associated with the 'Y.M.C.A.', see David Jarvis, 'Stanley Baldwin and the ideology of the Conservative response to socialism, 1918-1931' (unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Lancaster, 1991), pp. 437-44.

[77] See Philip Williamson, 'Skelton, (Archibald) Noel (1880–1935)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40226, accessed 6 July 2009]. Also, Ramsden, '"A party for owners", 57. The original articles are, Noel Skelton, 'Constructive Conservatism', *The Spectator*, 28 April, 5 May, 12 May, and 19 May 1923. It was later issued as a pamphlet, *Constructive Conservatism* (London, 1924). See also, 'Labour in the new era', *Quarterly Review*, 483 (January 1925), pp. 116-33; and, 'The safeguarding of British democracy', *English Review*, 43 (July 1926), pp. 23-9.

[78] The exception was an article praising Baldwin's triumph over Beaverbrook during the Empire Crusade. He repeated most of his ideas about a 'property-owning democracy', see Noel Skelton, 'A Conservative Survey', *Quarterly Review*, 509 (July 1931), pp. 140-56. Skelton died on 22 November 1935. John Buchan, another important Scottish Conservative, held Skelton in high-regard. Buchan's correspondence charts the tragic decline of Skelton's health. For example, see letters from John Buchan to his wife Susan Buchan, dated 16 June, 17 September, 22 September, 29 September, 11 November 1931, 19-20 October 1932, 28 March, 7 October 1934, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, John Buchan papers, 1st Baron Tweedsmuir, Acc-7214. Mf.MSS.306-307. Microfilm copies of this series of the Buchan papers were consulted in Edinburgh, but the originals belong to Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

[79] Noel Skelton, 'The safeguarding of British democracy', p. 29.

planning. Cochrane also played a significant role in internal party debates about industrial reorganisation in the early 1930s. He was still interested in agricultural reorganisation in 1936 because he was a member of the Potato Marketing Board and a subscriber to *Planning*—a broadsheet issued by Political and Economic Planning.[80] Like Sellon, Cochrane was deeply concerned about the fate of the small producer and he identified marketing boards as essential safeguards for individual initiative.[81]

Sellon's association with left-wing Scottish Conservatives prompted his decision to promote Scotland as an ideal test-case for new Conservative ideas in the 1930s. Surveying the difficulties facing the Conservative party in Scotland for the *English Review*, Sellon argued the economic depression had hit Scotland harder than England because of its reliance on heavy industry. He also argued the Scottish countryside was being ruined because of high taxation and crippling death duties. He wrote about appalling overcrowding in cities such as Glasgow where 30.4 per cent of its insured population was unemployed.[82] Under these conditions Sellon reasoned it was only a matter of time before Scottish Nationalists increased their following at the expense of National Liberal and Conservative votes. For this reason, he supported members of the Scottish public who called for decentralisation. Without a constructive policy, Sellon thought Scottish Nationalists could 'break the Conservative party in Scotland for a decade—if not for a generation'.[83]

Sellon insisted Scotland was amenable to radical Conservative policies for obvious reasons: 'Economic distress, combined with a certain lack of continuous cultural tradition, is a dangerous breeding ground for Communism, as Dundee and Glasgow well know. But used aright, they may become the spear point of a new Conservative Nationalism. Hitler is the

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[80] For a series of memorandums and correspondence between A.D. Cochrane, W.S. Morrison, and Joseph Ball, regarding proposals for the rationalisation of industry between 1929 and 1931, see Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, A.D. Cochrane papers, Acc.10218/22/3. It is likely that Cochrane was involved with W.S. Morrison's 'industrial foundations of society' committee for CRD in 1931. See John Ramsden, *The making of Conservative party policy. The Conservative research department since 1929* (London, 1980), p. 56. See letter from the Chairman of the Potato Marketing Board acknowledging Cochrane's resignation, 23 March 1936, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, A.D. Cochrane papers, Acc-10218/2/7. For Cochrane's subscriptions to magazines and newspapers, see Acc.10218/22/3.

[81] See Cochrane's notes on the programme for the Scottish Unionist Association conference at Dundee, 29 November 1935, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, A.D. Cochrane papers, Acc-10218/2/3.

[82] Hugh Sellon, 'Conservatism and Scotland', *English Review*, 58 (February 1934), p. 204.

[83] Ibid., p. 202.

latest exponent of this truth.'[84] Sellon viewed Scottish politics as more radical than the politics of England. Therefore, the country required radical Conservative solutions to solve its dire economic problems and prevent the rising tide of Scottish Nationalism.[85] Sellon's argument that the nineteenth century economic order was no longer sustainable and his suggestion Scottish workers find work on the land owed much to Elliot's analysis of British agriculture.[86] Sellon put forward a case for land settlement, which was to be entrusted to a national utility corporation. British agriculture would receive protection through a system of tariffs and safeguards to make it more profitable and marketing schemes would help guarantee sustainable agricultural products and long-term employment.[87] His plans for afforestation resembled Mussolini's draining of the Pontine Marshes, which turned previously uninhabitable land into new areas of agricultural cultivation.[88] Scotland was to be granted a regional assembly and a 'corporative council'. Sellon envisaged a Scotland leading the way on economic reorganisation.[89]

Sellon learned lessons from both the Nazi regime in Germany and the Fascist regime in Italy, but his intention in Scotland was always to secure Conservative dominance at the expense of extremist politics. This said, his political message for Scotland conflicted with his inclusive national Conservative message for England: 'Will Conservatism seize its chance in Scotland? It can only do so by renouncing economic Liberalism, as vigorously as it attacks Socialism. No compromise and cowardly flirtation with moderate Socialists or wavering Liberals will avail us here.'[90] It was the threat of communism and Scottish Nationalism that led him to portray his own economic ideas as radical solutions capable of rivalling revolutionary creeds. In reality, the majority of his proposals did not deviate from those published in *Whither, England*. The shift of tone had much to do with the context of the time. British political extremism had gained in popularity in 1934 and this persuaded him that 'safety lies in boldness' in Scotland. Sellon continued to resist fascism and dictatorship as a plausible means of governing the nation. In his mind, Scotland would be even more prone to rejecting revolutionary ideas because of the country's Calvinist roots: 'The

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[84] Sellon, 'Conservatism and Scotland', p. 210.
[85] Ibid., p. 205.
[86] See Chapter Six.
[87] Sellon, 'Conservatism and Scotland', pp. 206-7.
[88] Ibid., p. 208.
[89] Ibid., p. 209.
[90] Ibid., p. 210.

descendents of Scottish Calvinists, influenced—if at times unconsciously—by that most Republican of theocratic systems, will never sacrifice a shred of that democratic freedom in politics that the Scots were one of the first among the nations of Europe to obtain.' Sellon even went as far as to send a message of warning to Conservative readers of the *English Review* who found themselves attracted to the policies and rhetoric of the BUF: 'But any political adventure such as an attempt to introduce either the Italian or German "Unitary" State, any fancy uniforms, any appeal to mob oratory or mob coercion, and the chance of Conservatism and of Scotland will be lost for a generation and perhaps for ever.'[91]

Sellon's books were respected by influential Conservatives because they provided valuable counter-arguments against socialist and fascist ideas. For this reason, when Bryant reviewed *Whither, England* for the *Ashridge Journal*, he made it clear Sellon was a valuable Conservative asset, even though he did not agree with all of his political ideas: 'Mr. Sellon with spear and shield—more spear, perhaps, than shield, but that is the glorious prerogative of being young—leads us down into the forests and morasses that confront us and, with us or without us, gives battle to all the foes that bar our way.'[92] Bryant also considered Sellon's case for a 'property-owning democracy' to be a good one.[93] The *Times Literary Supplement* recognised Sellon's arguments as being representative of National Conservatism: 'The book deserves to be widely read and may be particularly commended to the consideration of thinkers whose natural bias in politics is towards the Left.'[94]

Sellon's Conservatism was more overtly exploited as a form of party political propaganda following the publication of his book *Democracy and Dictatorship*. Labelled 'The Book of the Hour' by *Politics In Review* between April and September 1934, it could be ordered direct from the Conservative and Unionist Association.[95] The book was a hardback consisting of 114 pages and it was printed by the independent publisher Lovat Dickson. According to Julia Stapleton, Dickson was the first publisher to propose the founding of a right-wing book club in the 1930s. Bryant feared CCO would support Dickson's idea rather than his own plans for the National Book Association.[96] Copies of the

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[91] Sellon, 'Conservatism and Scotland', pp. 210-1.
[92] Arthur Bryant, 'The making of Conservatives', *Ashridge Journal*, 13 (March 1933), pp. 44-5.
[93] Ibid., p. 45.
[94] 'Review of *Whither, England*', *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 December 1932.
[95] See *Politics In Review*, 1-3 (January-September 1934).
[96] Julia Stapleton, *Sir Arthur Bryant and national history in twentieth-century Britain* (Lanham, 2005), p. 109.

book were priced at just 2s, which means it was within the means of the general public. But it is questionable whether it was read outside educated circles. Nevertheless, the book formed part of Dickson's plans to capitalise on the potential of Allen Lane's Penguin Specials, which had been announced at a conference of publishers and book sellers in 1934.[97] Bryant's fears were probably well-founded considering CCO's promotion of Sellon's book in Conservative party literature.

Democracy and Dictatorship, then, was written for the general public and it was meant to undermine the revolutionary ideas of the Socialist League and the BUF. Sellon continued to insist on a compromise between the interests and rights of the individual and those of the national community.[98] Although he repeated his plans for constitutional reform, often referring his readers to *Whither, England*, he argued, 'viewing the Constitution as a whole, it does solve the problem of reconciling individual freedom with the security of the State better than any other political organisation that history knows of. And a realisation of this fact is most needful at a time when plans for a thorough reorganisation of the Constitution are being placed before the electorate by thinkers both of the Left and the Right'.[99] Here was a firm commitment to the parliamentary system and the balance of powers, which Walter Bagehot had famously proclaimed the key to the success of the British constitution.[100] Sellon also used the occasion to engage in partisanship, blaming the parliamentary Labour party for the rise of the Socialist League at its Conference in Leicester in 1932:

> The Socialist League's policy does undoubtedly amount to a plan for the modifying of the Constitution and for setting up of a government which would not be bound by ordinary constitutional rules. But if these proposals are virtually revolutionary, the blame for them rests on the Labour Party as a whole for having, at Leicester, decided on a policy, the implications of which were seen by Mr. Henderson, who vainly warned the Conference against them.[101]

Sellon's strategy targeted the Labour party by claiming it was dishonest about its plans for the constitution, whereas Stafford Cripps and the Socialist League were characterised as 'honest, outspoken and refreshingly logical' advocates of revolutionary politics.[102] In fact, Sellon agreed with many of Cripps' ideas, particularly those regarding the extension of

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[97] Lovat Dickson, *The house of words* (London, 1963), p. 153. Nicholas Joicey, 'A paperback guide to progress. Penguin books 1935-c.1951', *Twentieth Century British History*, 4 (1993), pp. 25-56.
[98] Hugh Sellon, *Democracy and dictatorship* (London, 1934), pp. 9-12.
[99] Ibid., p. 11-12.
[100] Ibid., pp. 18-20.
[101] Ibid., pp. 38-9.
[102] Ibid., p. 39.

parliamentary committees and his suggestion that every MP sit on at least one of them. He also supported Cripps' suggestion regarding fixed-term parliaments and the need for a smaller cabinet. In turn G.D.H. Cole was praised: '[Cole's] belief in the need for an Economic Council and a State Planning Commission is one shared by many Constitutionalists, and his remarks on the necessity for establishing new industries for old in depressed areas are valuable and suggestive.'[103] This was a tactical manoeuvre to encourage the constitutional left to abandon the Labour party and support the National Government, although many of Sellon's economic ideas were congruent with 'planners' of all political parties. Constitutional values were key arbiters in distancing national Conservatives from ideas associated with dictatorship and Sellon cited Baldwin's conduct in 1923 as the model for all MPs to follow because he 'refused to impose food taxes without a categorical acceptance of such fiscal reform by the electorate'.[104]

Sellon's critique of British fascism was just as engaging. He wrote that he had read Mosley's *The Greater Britain*, as well as the BUF's newspapers, *The Blackshirt* and *Fascist Week*. Although Sellon admired Mosley's corporatism, he wrote, 'it must be doubted whether Sir Oswald's methods for introducing Corporatism are suitable to Britain'.[105] Sellon disliked the foreign nature of Mosley's fascism and he condemned BUF articles glorifying the Nazi revolution as 'contrary to all traditions of British political decency'.[106] Sellon saw fascism as a universal concept, but he understood it to mean nothing more than national unity: 'The ideal of a national unity transcending all party and class interests, and symbolised by the emblem of the lictor's axe and rods, has perhaps been attained more closely in constitutional and democratic England than in any other country…British and French Fascism—and how strong it is was seen in 1914, in 1926, and in 1931—is democratic and liberal.'[107] Sellon's critique of British fascism sought to undermine its credibility in Conservative circles by categorising it as a poorer attempt to establish what Britain already possessed in the form of a constitutional National Government. He saw party politics and alternative governments as vital to the political process, which made fascism utterly

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[103] Sellon, *Democracy and dictatorship*, p. 57. Sellon reviewed G.D.H. Cole's *Studies in world economics* for Jerrold's *English Review* the same year. See Hugh Sellon, 'The economic dilemma', *English Review*, 58 (June 1934), pp. 749-51.
[104] Sellon, *Democracy and dictatorship*, p. 40.
[105] Ibid., p. 70.
[106] Ibid., p. 71.
[107] Ibid., p. 66.

redundant in its foreign form. When it really mattered most, Sellon stated, all Britain's mainstream political parties were reliable political partners who shared similar national goals:

> In our country, the typical Conservative perhaps feels the necessity of social organisation and national strength more strongly than the Liberal, while he differs from the typical Constitutional Socialist by his belief that social organisation must be moulded on lines that do not weaken private initiative and property. But the three great British parties agree on the fundamentals of national strength and public welfare.[108]

Sellon's importance during the 1930s relates mainly to his role in publicising constitutional Conservative ideas, which were based on the thinking of Conservative MPs like Skelton in the 1920s. Sellon contested radical interpretations of the Italian 'Corporate State' both at Ashridge and in the periodical press, and, in doing so, his ideas had more in common with the mainstream development of the Conservative party, especially after 1945.

Plans for a European Federal Union

One idea that was not central to Conservative political thought immediately after the Second World War was willingness to see Britain enter into a European Federal Union. Sellon was a keen supporter of this idea until the aggressive political strategies of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy challenged his thinking on international affairs. The refinements he made to his European outlook after 1933 underscores his moral rejection of extremist politics. In the early 1930s Sellon argued Britain should take a more active part in European affairs.[109] Sellon sympathised with Aristide Briand's famous memorandum of September 1930, which outlined plans for European Federal Union.[110] This sentiment was shared by Austen Chamberlain who wrote about Britain's fragmented Empire and her need to look towards Europe in an important article for the periodical press.[111] Other high-ranking Conservatives

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[108] Sellon, *Democracy and dictatorship*, p. 79.
[109] Sellon, 'England and Europe', p. 7.
[110] Ibid., p. 12. Briand circulated the document before a meeting of the League of Nations Assembly in September 1930, but he had been talking-up European Federal Union since 1929, see Patrick O. Cohrs, *The unfinished peace after World War I. America, Britain and the stabilisation of Europe 1919-1932* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 579-80.
[111] Austen Chamberlain, 'Great Britain as a European power', *Journal of Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 9 (1930), pp. 180-8. See Richard S. Grayson, *Austen Chamberlain and the commitment to Europe: British foreign policy 1924-29* (London, 1997), p. 136.

were interested in European federation, notably L.S. Amery, but they rejected British participation in the scheme because they attached more importance to the British Empire.[112] Sellon was more pro-European than Chamberlain, probably because of his own European heritage, and he disagreed with imperialists like Amery: 'Left out in the cold, between the Scylla of Europe and the Charybdis of America, the British ship would be hard put to it to avoid shipwreck.'[113] Sellon's vision for a federal Europe formed part of a much larger plan for a world of federal states based on 'broad divisions of race culture and tradition'.[114] Crucially, Britain was to orchestrate the new European federal bloc from within—no longer would she stand aloof in the hope that she could hold the balance of power.[115]

Sellon's experience in Scotland helped to convince him of the potential for European Federal Union: 'In the United State of Britain the Scottish and English nationalisms are preserved. The lion holds first rank in the Royal Arms in Scotland and the leopards in England. The Union of the two kingdoms has not involved the destruction of the two separate national identities.'[116] The success of the British Empire furnished him with even more proof of how different states could work within the same political system without sacrificing their national identities. It was the ideal of a world 'super State' that troubled him because he judged the proposal to be unrealistic.[117]

However, Sellon's support for European Federal Union depended on major compromises being made between European states. Hitler's 'seizure of power' in Germany and the forming of the Rome-Berlin axis in 1936 complicated matters considerably. In his book *Europe at the Cross-Roads*, which was published by Bryant's National Book Association in 1937, Sellon sympathised with all the major European powers in search for a peaceful settlement, but cracks had appeared in his plans for European Federal Union.[118] The anti-Semitism of the Nazi regime troubled him deeply: '[T]he National Socialists have acted contrary, not only to the interests of Germany but to Christian civilisation and the traditional

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[112] Richard S. Grayson, 'Leo Amery's imperialist alternative to appeasement in the 1930s', *Twentieth Century British History* 17 (2006), pp. 494-9.
[113] Sellon, 'England and Europe', pp. 12-13.
[114] Ibid., 13. Amery advocated almost identical plans, only he saw the British Empire as a federal block in itself. See Grayson, 'Leo Amery's imperialist alternative', pp. 499-500.
[115] See P.W. Schroeder, 'Munich and the British tradition', *Historical Journal*, 19 (1976), pp. 223-43.
[116] Sellon, 'England and Europe', pp. 13-14.
[117] Ibid., p. 15.
[118] The book was dedicated to Arthur Bryant.

moral standards of Europe.'[119] In the late 1930s he focused solely on France as an international partner because he believed the country had more in common with Britain.[120] But he still wanted to strike a deal with Hitler's Germany. He believed Hitler would comply with British policy if France abandoned its relationship with Russia.

Sellon recognised that any such deal required compromises from the British government and this meant the return of British mandated territories or former colonies to Germany.[121] Sellon's attitude towards Europe and the empire evolved so much during the 1930s that he began to attract the attention of imperialists like Amery who wrote to Sellon congratulating him on his latest book.[122] Amery disagreed with Sellon on just one point—the German colonial question: 'I don't believe that any concession in that sphere would materially affect Germany's European outlook or mitigate her determination to expand in Europe.'[123] Sellon then wrote back to explain the root of their differences: 'I admit that my feelings on the whole problem have been influenced by the evidence I had, years ago, of the extent to which people of almost all classes and political points of view in pre-Hitler Germany hoped to get back colonies.'[124] Sellon's arguments about the return of German colonies amounted to an alternative form of appeasement, which Amery judged to be illogical considering Hitler's record in Europe. Faced with the aggressive foreign policy, the racism, and the radicalisation of the German Nazi regime, Sellon could not sustain his optimistic vision of a united Europe. This explains why he now found himself on the same page as Amery. Any suggestion that Britain would be able to concentrate her energies on imperial affairs because of a newfound solidarity in Europe looked increasingly misplaced as the 1930s wore on.

Concluding Remarks

Sellon's 'progressive' Conservatism did much to sustain the Conservative party as a party of ideas in the 1930s, but importantly his arguments bolstered both the party's intellectual and rhetorical defences against potential right-wing infiltrators who hoped to persuade

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[119] Hugh Sellon, *Europe at the cross-roads* (London, 1937), p. 173.
[120] Ibid., p. 269.
[121] Ibid., p. 271.
[122] L.S. Amery to Hugh Sellon, 8 December 1937, Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre, AMEL 2/1/27.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Hugh Sellon to L.S. Amery, 11 December 1937, Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre, AMEL 2/1/27.

disgruntled Conservatives of the value of revolutionary politics and extremist movements like the BUF. Sellon's willingness to market Conservative ideas either as constitutional or radical innovations depending on immediate political circumstances was a valuable pragmatic approach, which many 'progressive' Conservative MPs also employed throughout this period.[125] 'Languages of corporatism' and 'action' were vital components in the Conservative repertoire, but these ideas represented only one strand of Conservative thinking. As we have seen, Marriott offered public support to those Conservatives and Liberals who still believed in Britain's 'march of progress', constitutionalism, economic liberalism, and the 'civilising mission' of empire. Marriott promised continuity by encouraging Baldwin to anchor Conservative politics on the middle ground, but this continuity was liberal because it evolved to account for democratic progress. Hearnshaw encouraged the opposite until he was forced to accept that revolutionary challenges to Britain's parliamentary system might prevail if democracy could not be made to succeed. Ultimately, however, he wanted to resurrect nineteenth century politics by constructing a narrow Conservative-Liberal alliance, which he did much to promote in Anglican and Nonconformist circles. As these three case studies show, the Conservative party was a very 'broad church' in the 1930s. Evidently, it was not short of willing advocates of different 'ideologies of Conservatism'. As the following chapters show, the party's youth and its MPs also did much to sustain this view. In fact, it can be argued that each of these Conservative 'languages' helped to sustain Conservative and Liberal participation in the National Government.

[125] See Chapter Six.

Chapter Five

Dorothy Crisp, Young Conservatives, and the Ins and Outs of Tory Politics

This chapter focuses on the right-wing political journalist Dorothy Crisp and a small group of young Conservatives with whom she associated in the early 1930s. In exploring the margins of mainstream Conservatism, it charts the failure of Crisp to 'reform' the Conservative party through the written word. Crisp wrote articles for monthly periodicals such as the *Ashridge Journal*, *English Review*, and *National Review* hoping to persuade Conservative MPs and publicists to adopt her radical ideas.[1] At the same time, she explored the popular press as a means of influencing the general public and as a way of applying pressure on the Conservative party to adopt a more traditional form of Conservatism. Apparently unable to gain access to influential newspapers like the *Daily Mail*, Crisp wrote a weekly political column for Lady Houston's *Saturday Review* between 1933 and 1936, posing as Lord Rothermere's acolyte, Thomas Polson.[2] But Crisp also wrote under he own name, and was a prolific political journalist for both elite and popular readerships down to the late 1940s.[3] She also wrote weightier political books for educated readers. Her most influential work was *The Rebirth of Conservatism* (1931) because a small number of high-ranking Conservatives agreed to take part in the venture, while others recommended it for publication. Crisp's association with mainstream Conservatives such as Arthur Bryant, John Buchan, and Oliver Stanley is a curious one considering her reputation as a virulent critic of

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[1] Crisp started writing articles for the periodical press in the late 1920s. Her first work was 'Unchristian socialism', *National Review*, 90 (September 1927), pp. 110-21.

[2] According to Crisp's memoirs, Polson allowed her to use his name for publication when she informed him that she found it difficult to get articles accepted by the *Saturday Review* under her own name. See Dorothy Crisp, *A life for England* (London, 1946), pp. 119-20. Thomas Polson was Chief Inspector of Clothing at the Royal Army Clothing Department during the First World War. It was there that he met Lord Rothermere who was the department's Director-General. In 1917 Rothermere was appointed Air Minister and Polson became his personal assistant. Polson was elected MP for Dover in 1921 in a controversial by-election. Polson defeated the diehard Conservative MP J.J. Astor who supported the coalition government. Polson's victory owed much to the support of Rothermere, Esmond Harmsworth and Horatio Bottomley. Shortly after Polson's election Rothermere launched the Anti-Waste League and Polson was appointed Treasurer. Polson then lost his seat to an official Conservative candidate at the 1922 election. He was Chairman of the United Empire Party in 1930. For a more detailed account of these events see Maurice Cowling, *The impact of labour 1920-1924* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 54-57. Also, Stuart Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative party. The crisis of 1929-1931* (London, 1988), pp. 46-63.

[3] Crisp wrote a weekly column for the *Sunday Dispatch* in 1943, but she also wrote articles for the *Daily Sketch*, *Everybody's* and *Truth* (both weeklies) in the 1940s.

Baldwinite Conservatism was already well established.[4] The interest shown in Crisp's work by Conservatives loyal to Baldwin's leadership underscores the ability of the Conservative party to sustain a broad coalition of opinion during times of national crisis. Significantly, CCO was persuaded to deposit copies of her work in Conservative reference libraries in London and at Ashridge College, but CCO refused to endorse her in public. It was left to independent-minded literary Conservatives to encourage Crisp to publish her views.[5]

Crisp's memoirs are an invaluable source for understanding the context of her political writing in the 1930s. She describes the motivations behind her political journalism and reveals her mainstream Conservative and radical-right connections. However, her memoirs should be read with caution because she wrote them immediately after the Second World War. Crisp was then looking to take over the leadership of the British Housewives League (BHL) and had strong reason to draw clear lines between her brand of right-wing conservatism and pre-war fascism. But we still get a clear sense of how Crisp became disillusioned at her failure to make an immediate impact on the Conservative party and Parliament during the 1930s. As the decade wore on, she became more radical in her attempts to 'reform' the party and the constitution. Influenced by Edwardian radical-right traditions, she tried to organise political movements to pressurise the party into changing its policy. Crisp showed considerable interest in Lord Rothermere's United Empire Party and Lord Lymington's English Mistery, but ultimately rejected these movements because she recognised they were inadequate vehicles for her own idiosyncratic brand of conservatism. Significantly, Crisp lamented the death of Leo Maxse—the former editor of the *National Review*—whom she had seen as the best hope for rejuvenating the party along radical lines.[6]

It was Crisp's propensity for direct action and political militancy that was most striking in the 1930s. In the *Rebirth of Conservatism* she argued that the right should mimic the violent politics of the left: 'It is the obvious and immediate duty of Conservatism to compromise no longer with the teaching that can awaken so ugly a spirit, but to denounce it

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[4] Dorothy Crisp, 'A Yorkshire view of "the Conservative message"', *National Review*, 94 (November 1929), pp. 431-8. Some of the views she later published in her book *The rebirth of Conservatism* were rehearsed here.

[5] Crisp, *A life for England*, pp. 43-75. Crisp also revealed that the Labour MP Oliver Baldwin encouraged her to publish *The rebirth of Conservatism* after reading her articles in the *National Review*. The book was dedicated to 'M.H.', the initials of Oliver Baldwin's pseudonym, Martin Hussingtree, which he adopted for his novel *Konyetz* (London, 1924). See Dorothy Crisp, *The rebirth of Conservatism* (London, 1931), p. vi.

[6] Dorothy Crisp, 'Leo Maxse—the lost leader', *Saturday Review*, 158 (24 November 1934), p. 431.

as evil to the core, to endeavour by every means fully to arouse its opposite, and to superintend at once the resurrection of the British Constitution.'[7] Crisp refused to recognise new taboos around direct action and political violence. As Jon Lawrence argues, public attitudes towards political violence shifted dramatically after the First World War, especially on the mainstream right. There were a number of important factors for this shift, including the importance of women voters, the rise of the socialist left, fear of revolutionary violence, the brutalisation of war, and the end of male non-voters attending election meetings.[8] In failing to register this shift, Crisp exposed her own self-conscious, backward-looking, 'Tory' world view. Not only was she a strong supporter of aristocratic values and an avowed anti-democrat, but she was an economic liberal and a confirmed individualist. In short, many of her ideas were as inimical to fascism, with its yearning for cultural renewal of the folk, as they were to the various strands of progressive conservatism advanced in the 1930s.

Never shy of ambition, Crisp intended to address her concerns by becoming Britain's first woman Prime Minister.[9] Few women were MPs and only the Duchess of Atholl had achieved cabinet rank among Conservatives by the time that Crisp voiced her ambition during the early 1930s. Her feminism was never as militant as her conservatism or her patriotism, while her confidence, or naivety, probably had much to do with her upper middle-class background as well as her age. Crisp acknowledged during the 1920s that she had known that women's suffrage 'had been settled then for years'.[10] This view seems to have limited her political engagement with women's issues. Her conservatism meant she believed in individual merit as opposed to a strict equality of the sexes, especially when it came to work. Until the mid-1930s Crisp 'believed not that sex does or could make any essential difference to character, but that men because…they led much wider and more varied lives, were necessarily less trivial-minded'.[11] Only on one occasion during the 1930s did she write specifically about women. She drew on Margaret Mead's anthropological studies in Papua New Guinea to indicate the diverging cultural roles of women in different

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[7] Crisp, *The rebirth of Conservatism*, p. 74.
[8] See Jon Lawrence, 'The transformation of British public politics after the First World War', *Past and Present*, 190 (February 2006), pp. 185-216; and, 'Forging a peaceable kingdom: war, violence, and fear of brutalization in post-First World War Britain', *Journal of Modern History*, 75 (September 2003), pp. 557-89; and, 'Fascist violence and the politics of public order in inter-war Britain: the Olympia debate revisited', *Historical Research*, 76 (May 2003), pp. 238-67.
[9] Crisp, *A life for England*, p. 42.
[10] Ibid., p. 8.
[11] Ibid., p. 102.

societies. But Crisp disagreed with Mead, stating that her anthropological studies were an attempt to explain the differences between men and women, which simply did not exist: 'In an unusually wide experience of people of very different classes, and some different nationalities, I have not found a single characteristic, capability, virtue or vice to be generally the property of either sex. People differ according to type of personality, or class. They do not differ according to sex.'[12] Crisp's upbringing dictated that she was not prevented from reaching her goals because of male chauvinism, but crucially she was not disillusioned with the outcome of women's suffrage, unlike a number of former suffragettes who joined the BUF in the 1930s.[13] This said, Crisp recognised that women were not yet accepted as equals in British society, even if they were in law: 'As long as women who work are paid less than men, as long as their right to work when and as they will is questioned, so long will there remain the necessity for women to look on men as their real and most reliable source of income; an abdominal necessity which, as it works in terms of everyday life, corrodes the happiness of the male to a far greater extent even than that of the female.'[14] Crisp spoke on the platform for Flora Drummond's (a former suffragette) Women's Guild of Empire in the early 1930s, which confirms she was a feminist. But ultimately she was far too content to let her own ability and intelligence do the talking when it came to forming a political career. Much has been made of Crisp's later role as the leader of the BHL in the late 1940s.[15] Beatrix Campbell, James Hinton, and Graham Macklin have all drawn attention to the militancy of the league, as well as Crisp's authoritarian approach to leadership. But even then she did not pursue a progressive feminist agenda. Instead, she embraced the league's domesticity, although she did try to transform the league into a parliamentary party, echoing Christabel Pankhurst's Women's Party of 1918.[16]

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[12] Dorothy Crisp, *The commonsense of Christianity* (London, 1942), p. 60. The book included her original manuscript *Christ is no pacifist* (London, 1938), as well as her article on women, which she wrote in February 1936. Crisp had likely read Margaret Mead's, *Sex and temperament in three primitive societies* (New York, 1935).

[13] See Julie V. Gottlieb, *Feminine fascism. Women in Britain's fascist movement* (London, 2003), pp. 147-76.

[14] Crisp, *The commonsense of Christianity*, p. 62.

[15] Beatrix Campbell, *The iron ladies. Why do women vote Tory?* (London, 1987), pp. 80-1. James Hinton, 'Militant housewives: the British Housewives' League and the Attlee government', *History Workshop Journal*, 38 (1994), pp. 143-50. Graham D. Macklin, '"A quite natural and moderate defensive feeling"? The 1945 Hampstead "anti-alien" petition', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 37 (2003), pp. 290-4.

[16] Hinton, 'Militant housewives', 143-9. As Hinton notes, Crisp retained her maiden name after marriage, but whether she regarded this as an act of feminism or just the natural preserve for a

Crisp's Background and Early Political Activism

Dorothy Crisp was born in Leeds in 1907. Her father's family were High Church Tories and her mother's family were made up of 'several varieties of uncompromising non-conformists'.[17] Crisp explained in her memoirs that after serving in the First World War her father did 'nothing at all save perform the light duties of agent for the property from which our income was derived'.[18] Crisp enjoyed a relatively privileged upbringing and she benefitted from her father's property ownership, but she acknowledged her mother as the main formative influence on her life. Her mother supported her financially while she was a struggling writer in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[19] Crisp attended an Anglo-Catholic convent school where she studied the Bible and the Prayer Book for an hour each day, but she was soon relocated to Thoresby High School in Leeds because it was well-suited to preparing pupils for the Oxford Entrance Examination.[20] Crisp came third in the Lady Margaret Hall Entrance Examination, but first deferred her entry, and later quit her studies altogether to travel around Europe.[21]

Crisp wrote that her association with the Conservative party began when she was just sixteen years old. She sent a letter to the local Conservative Association asking for work and, soon afterwards, she was contacted by a local party official who, shocked by her youth, nevertheless suggested she canvass for the party at the next election. Crisp then joined a committee to form a local branch of the Junior Imperial League where she claimed to have been 'roped in to speak at the meetings prior to the City Council elections'.[22] At one political meeting, Crisp purposefully antagonised socialists in the crowd, much to the annoyance of the local Conservative party agent. Crisp referred to the incident as 'the beginning of the end of my brief connection with the Conservative Party. It was over before I was twenty-one

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budding writer is not clear. On Christabel Pankhurst's Women's Party of 1918, see Gottlieb, *Feminine fascism*, p. 157.

[17] Crisp, *A life for England*, p. 1.

[18] Ibid., p. 4.

[19] Ibid., p. 3.

[20] Ibid., pp. 5-10.

[21] Ibid., pp. 17-25.

[22] Ibid., pp. 12-14. Frustratingly, Crisp fails to give precise dates in her memoirs. Occasionally she refers to her age, but it is extremely difficult to say with any certainty when specific moments in her life actually occurred. Judging from her memoirs as a whole the meetings she spoke about must have been conducted between 1924 and 1927.

when I wrote the following definition of leadership: "a leader is one who devotes the best of his mind and spirit to the formation of a policy and then employs the whole of his energy to bring it into effect"'.[23] Crisp considered her credo to be the antithesis of Baldwin's style as party leader. But she never found an alternative political home:

> Socialism I always instinctively hated for its materialism, its enmity to freedom, its lack of patriotism and its ignorance concerning the Empire. Liberalism even in my youngest days was obviously dying as a practical force in politics. Therefore I had no choice of political party…But, as I have said, they succeeded in turning me, well before I was twenty-one, into a very decided—Independent.[24]

Crisp's attitude towards the party during the 1930s was certainly antagonistic, but she always regarded herself as a genuine Conservative who was out of sympathy with the prevailing *modus operandi* of her party. In fact, her view of the party did not change between 1929 and the late 1940s. Only G.C. Webber pays serious attention to Crisp's ideas during the 1930s. Webber briefly describes Crisp's 'curious marriage of "Liberal" and "Tory" attitudes', but he ignores her literary activities, including her attempts to form new political movements, and the importance of her brief association with and rejection of both mainstream Conservatives and radical-right figures.[25] Webber relies largely on *The Rebirth of Conservatism*, ignoring her important contributions to journalism, which were read by a larger public in the 1930s.

Political Writing and 'The Rebirth of Conservatism'

Crisp travelled Europe in October 1928 and before she embarked on her trip she claimed to have decided emphatically 'to revive the political world through the medium of newspapers'.[26] She spent most of her time in Vienna where she found the political tension exhilarating: 'Politically, nothing could have been more extraordinary than life in Vienna, and the open fear of but half-concealed mob rule was to me at the same time comic-opera, tragedy, and a realisation that I am one of those lunatics who are never half so alive as when

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[23] Crisp, *A life for England*, p. 16. If Crisp no longer engaged in local party activism on behalf of the Conservatives at the age of 21 then she must have ended her association before the 1929 general election.
[24] Ibid.
[25] G.C. Webber, *The ideology of the British right 1918-1939* (Beckenham, 1986), pp. 83-6. See Martin Durham's review in *History Workshop Journal*, 26 (1988), pp. 190-3.
[26] Crisp, *A life for England*, pp. 24-26.

in the presence of physical danger.'[27] Crisp's experience in Austria put her, like Oswald Mosley, out of sympathy with the dominant ethos of a would-be 'peaceable' age. Her trips to Austria, France, and Italy also allowed her to cut her teeth as a journalist writing a series of articles for the *Yorkshire Post* about her experiences.[28]

In the winter of 1929-30 Crisp approached Leo Maxse at the *National Review* in the hope that he could arrange a meeting for her with either Lord Beaverbrook or Lord Rothermere. Crisp wanted them to help her pressurise MPs into adopting her plans for political reform.[29] Clearly she had taken notice of Beaverbrook's use of the *Daily Express* during the 'Empire Crusade'.[30] Crisp later recalled her media strategy:

> I wanted the same space in a National newspaper for three weeks. I wanted each day to tackle a different department of National affairs—taxation—disarmament—the growing number of officials, and so on…Beneath the article I wanted to have published two identical coupons stating that the reader agreed with the theory and wanted the resultant proposition put into practice. These coupons were to be sent by those who agreed, one to their Member of Parliament and the other to me care of the newspaper. Thus not only could a sound body of opinion be created or, in my belief, more accurately, be given an opportunity to express itself, but the force of that opinion could be trained on the existing House of Commons.[31]

On Maxse's advice Crisp introduced herself to the editorial team at the *Daily Mail* and she explained to them her plans to 'force the Conservative Party to become healthy, decent and active'.[32] However, the editors stated that her name was not yet high-profile enough and that she over-estimated the power of the *Daily Mail*, including its ability to publish politically challenging material.[33] Crisp later claimed Rothermere, the *Daily Mail*, and Beaverbrook adopted a programme that was almost identical to her own when they launched the United Empire Party (UEP) in February 1930. Surprisingly, then, she did not play an active role in the running of its organisation. This was probably because she was vain enough to think that

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[27] Crisp, *A life for England*, p. 27. At this time, the Heimwehr (a local anti-communist and patriotic militia who were sometimes regarded as the paramilitary wing of the Christian Social party of Austria) were conducting a major anti-socialist demonstration in the town of Wiener-Neustadt. The Schutzbund (a rival militia established by the Social Democratic party of Austria) planned to retaliate in Vienna. Crisp witnessed both of these events.
[28] Ibid., pp. 32-6.
[29] Ibid., p. 38.
[30] Philip Williamson, *National crisis and National Government. British politics, the economy and empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 121-2.
[31] Crisp, *A life for England*, p. 39.
[32] Ibid., p. 42.
[33] Ibid., p. 47. This corresponds with my arguments about the *Daily Mail* and other right-wing newspapers in Chapter One.

she stood a much better chance of success on her own: 'It was, quite simply, that England has no use for Press Peers and that I could not see the people of England, even in dire circumstances, throwing out known politicians to establish the leadership of either Lord Rothermere or any Press magnate. A young woman with a wild idea would have had a far greater chance!'[34] Nevertheless, it was her interest in the UEP that led her to the party's Chief Organiser, Thomas Polson (the *nom de plume* she would later rely on at the *Saturday Review*).

Crisp's experience at the *Daily Mail* persuaded her to write and publish a major work on conservatism in 1930-31. She thought that *The Rebirth of Conservatism* would raise her profile amongst political elites. Struggling to find a publisher and impressed with a recent speech by Stanley Baldwin on youth, Crisp decided to send her manuscript to the Conservative leader in the hope that she could convince him of her 'ability to wage a campaign throughout the country for the re-union of Principles and Politics'. Needless to say, she received a courteous response from Baldwin's private secretary but no official support from CCO. Crisp then wrote to other mainstream Conservatives. John Buchan told her the book contained 'much admirable good sense' and he agreed to write its introduction, while Oliver Stanley agreed to write its concluding summary. In acquiring the services of Buchan and Stanley, Crisp's work suddenly received a more orthodox Conservative stamp of approval, easing its route to publication.[35]

According to Crisp, Buchan told her that modern politics was 'entirely lacking in enthusiasm' and that the 'country needs a fanatic'. He apparently also offered advice on possible radical young contributors.[36] Crisp's arguments match Buchan's rhetoric at the time. In a speech at the Oxford Carlton Club in February 1932, Buchan explained the different political outlooks of young Conservatives who attended a recent conference of University Conservatives Societies in Liverpool:

> Conventional Conservatism was confined to the delegates from the more modern universities, like Leeds and Sheffield, while the Oxford and Cambridge delegations, composed principally of Etonians, advocated views which would have secured their instant expulsion from any party caucus…That, Sir, has always been a characteristic of Oxford Toryism…It is so sure of its ultimate goal that it can afford to trifle with the intermediate stages…As we become older I am afraid that first fine careless rapture dies away…We become cautious opportunists and cut our coat according to

[34] Crisp, *A life for England*, pp. 53-4.
[35] Ibid., pp. 45, 50, 53-8.
[36] Ibid., p. 59.

> our very exiguous cloth. But that is a dismal attitude of mind—a hopeless attitude unless it is constantly freshened and vivified by the optimism and ardour and, shall I say, truer commonsense of those who have not yet been caught up in the machine.[37]

As an independent literary Conservative and MP for the Scottish Universities, Buchan was a popular figure with young Conservatives, and, as here, he encouraged them even when their views conflicted with official party policy. This was why Buchan was willing to support Crisp in the early 1930s and why those young Conservatives who wrote in her book were selected from the old universities.

However, it was not Buchan but Bryant who guaranteed the book's publication. When Murray rejected the book because it did not have the support of CCO, Crisp sent her manuscript to Methuen & Co., who forwarded it to Bryant for peer review. Crisp later recalled Bryant's comments in his reader's report: 'The author (…Miss Crisp) is brave and sincere and not disillusioned. And she has a great deal of common-sense and has employed it in her examination of our political ideals and structure in a way which no one else has been brave enough to do.' Bryant also recommended a marketing strategy for the book: 'Well advertised and placed it might attract considerable attention, sell well and reflect great credit on the House that was enterprising enough to publish it.'[38] After Bryant's ringing endorsement the book was published in February 1931.

Crisp's Conservatism and Constitutionalism

'Conservatism', Crisp proclaimed, 'has in practice been corrupted during the last twenty-five years into a meaningless half-socialism.'[39] The Conservative party, she reasoned, abandoned its core values after its heavy defeat in the 1906 election. In other words, Crisp lamented the rise of what E.H.H. Green terms 'Conservative Collectivism'.[40] Crisp's politics resembled those of the late-Victorian Conservative party and she would have been at home under Lord

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[37] Speech at Oxford Carlton Club Dinner, 12 February 1932, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, John Buchan papers, 1st Baron Tweedsmuir, Acc-7214. Mf.MSS.312. Buchan refers here to 'that first fine careless rapture'. The phrase is borrowed from Robert Browning's poem *Home-thoughts, from abroad* (1845): 'That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over Lest you should think he could never recapture The first fine careless rapture!'

[38] Crisp, *A life for England*, pp. 65-7.

[39] Crisp, *The rebirth of Conservatism*, p. 8.

[40] See E.H.H. Green, 'English idealism, Conservatism, and collectivism, 1880-1914', in E.H.H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism. Conservative political ideas in the twentieth century* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 69-70.

Salisbury's leadership. But when it came to deciding on how best to implement her ideas she was influenced by the pressure-group politics of the Edwardian radical-right and Leo Maxse's *National Review*.

Crisp's anti-socialism was based on two factors, her religious outlook and her view of an anti-democratic, hierarchical society. Crisp wrote, 'Socialism has nothing to say of God, nothing to say of the pursuit of noble character for nobility's own sake. Even to its materialistic aim it follows no elevating path.'[41] In Crisp's view, character building was a slow process that would take years, perhaps even decades to ferment. Crisp valued the working classes in the sense that she accepted they played a role in establishing Britain's greatness, but her view of character was a convenient excuse for reversing universal suffrage in favour of the upper-classes.[42] Like most interwar Conservatives, Crisp rejected arguments about equality. She believed 'human nature, though it may be changed by its own sustained and tenacious struggle, will most certainly never be altered by a rearrangement of laws'.[43] This, of course, did not mean that certain members of the electorate had no value or that they were not equal with their 'masters' in a spiritual sense. Crisp admitted, 'There is the equality of common humanity, but it does not abolish those differences between class and class which by a natural process have grown out of savagery, and distinctions of birth.'[44]

Crisp also disparaged the influence of Britain's affluent middle-class and business elite because she argued it undermined the landed aristocratic tradition. As we shall see, this conflicted with her obsessive promotion of economic liberalism and individualism. Crisp was anti-American and it was probably the USA that she had in mind when she wrote, 'As the new countries reveal, a plutocracy is an ugly thing, but an aristocracy may be the elder brother in a state. A fortune made in a generation too often leaves its owner without suspicion of the arts and graces of life, and without the culture which leisure for deep thought may bring.'[45] Unlike Hearnshaw or Sellon, Crisp refused to endorse a meritocratic society because she wanted the restoration of old-fashioned aristocratic paternalism. Rejecting Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, Crisp turned to the sixteenth century political philosopher Jean Bodin because he argued the state was not the sum of individuals but 'a

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[41] Crisp, *The rebirth of Conservatism*, p. 5.
[42] Ibid., p. 94-5.
[43] Ibid., p. 18.
[44] Ibid., p. 67.
[45] Ibid., pp. 67-8.

group of groups'. And, like Sellon, Crisp glorified property ownership and the family as the best means of preventing individualism from turning into license.[46] Predictably, Crisp was also against high levels of taxation, particularly inheritance tax, because she thought it undermined man's work ethic and his quest for self-improvement; but surely also because it threatened the landed aristocracy.[47] Taxation would be the bugbear of her political journalism throughout the 1930s.

Interestingly, Crisp supported a minimum wage for industry, but this gesture was not as progressive as one might think. She argued that workers would be more productive if most of their wages were based on performance. Any minimum wage would have been extremely low if she had decided on the level. Despite her rhetoric, her adoption of the policy was not based on her concern for the welfare of workers. Like those on the left and right of the party, she was interested in new ways of disrupting the worker's right to strike, but her proposals were not corporatist because she dismissed worker participation in industrial arbitration: 'The creation of a court with a national viewpoint, to deal with disputes which employers and workers cannot settle alone, and composed of two experts in the trade, two judges, and a chairman with a casting vote, would go far to prevent a repetition of the havoc Socialism has wrought in so short a time.'[48] Ironically, Crisp appears to have acknowledged the fallacy of the Italian 'Corporate State' at a time when other Conservative intellectuals and MPs failed to do so. She dismissed the Italian model of economic reorganisation because she wanted the control of industry to be in the hands of employers, not the state. However, she did want more government protection (or legal rights) for industry and private enterprise at the expense of workers.[49] Crisp would have rejected corporatism because of its proximity to socialism. Indeed, her free market objections to state interference were dogmatic enough to put her at odds with National Government efforts at 'rationalising' production:

> Socialism exhorts the worker to slow down production and to limit output as a service to himself and to his class, but the facts concerning production are that the more there is produced, the greater the supply to meet the demand, and the cheaper and the more easily obtained the commodity. The belief that to limit production is to secure permanent employment is most narrow and short-sighted.[50]

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[46] Crisp, The r*ebirth of Conservatism,* p. 24.
[47] Ibid., p. 25.
[48] Ibid., p. 42.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., p. 47.

This was a strong repudiation of what many 'progressive' Conservative MPs, like the Y.M.C.A., were proposing by the late 1920s. While Crisp also rejected the Keynesian goal of full employment because she demanded self-determination and hard-work; she disliked state interference and industrial reorganisation schemes as means of stimulating employment. Instead, Crisp wished to strengthen the state as a bulwark for property-owners and high-earners.

Interestingly, Crisp drew on Hearnshaw and Bagehot when writing about the British constitution. She referred to Hearnshaw's support for 'Royal Monarchy—as distinct from tyranny on the one hand and proprietorship on the other hand.' While she quoted Bagehot's arguments about democracy: 'The wide gift of the elective franchise will be a great calamity to the whole nation, and to those who gain it as great a calamity as to any.'[51] After acknowledging these influences, she summarised her own constitutional proposals:

> The abolition of the pauper vote, the universal raising of the age at which a vote may be claimed to twenty-five, the Commons as the expression of, and safety-valve for, public opinion, but not the complete controller of all government; the reformed Upper House, the creation of whose new members rests in the hands of the most politically experienced person in the realm, His Majesty the King—in short, the revival of government by the King, Lords and Commons is necessary and essential to England's well-being.[52]

The word 'revival' is important here because it indicates the limitations of Crisp's critique of modern politics. Her restorationist constitutionalism, however misguided, or unrealistic, distinguished her from 'proto-fascists' and fascists, who both sought to construct an alternative modernity (a new world out of the old).[53] Although Crisp was not afraid to adopt militant political strategies to pressurise MPs into adopting her ideas, she did not envisage revolutionising the constitution or adopting dictatorial systems of government. Crisp wanted

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[51] Crisp, The r*ebirth of Conservatism,* p. 70.
[52] Ibid., p. 75.
[53] See Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London, 1991), pp. 50-51. In this seminal work, Griffin distinguishes between traditional conservatism (restorationism), 'proto-fascism', and genuine fascism. Conservative restorationsists believe in turning back the clock to an aristocratic, monarchical, pre-democratic age. Fascists actively seek to revolutionise the existing political and social order (or national culture). 'Proto-fascists' fall between the cracks because they choose to wait for a new order to emerge organically out of the old. Griffin has explored the importance of an alternative modernity to fascist thought and action in much greater detail in his recent work. See Roger Griffin, *Modernism and fascism. The sense of a beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 349-54.

to ‘rebalance’ the constitution because she thought MPs had failed adequately to defend its existing safeguards.[54]

Crisp desired an elite politics centred on the House of Lords, but her proposals also criticised candidate selection for the Commons and party politics as a whole. Crisp wanted to disrupt the rise of working-class candidates to the Commons by insisting on ‘some achievement in business or attainment in an intellectual pursuit’. She reasoned men should not ‘rise easily…they should rise high’. Crisp also believed ‘the triumph of Conservatism’ would lead to the marginalisation or breakdown of the party political system. She argued, ‘if the party system as to-day known dies, there will be few to bewail its passing. Certainly it is high time for political organizations to realize that they are there to serve a cause, and not to dictate to the individual members of the party’.[55] Her constitutional ideas offered little more than a return to Bagehot’s celebrated understanding of the mechanics of the British system, but at the same time she was determined to make clear her view that conservatism was a genuine philosophy, which could not be radically altered to suit the ‘mutilated’ politics of a modern democratic age.

Young Conservatives and the Universities

Crisp was an important rallying-point for young Conservatives in the early 1930s. After the publication of her book, Bryant invited her to write an article for the *Ashridge Journal* about her experience of canvassing for the party. However, Crisp did not waste the opportunity to publicise her own agenda or her book: ‘It is for us to read carefully those books which set forth Conservative philosophy, to graft their arguments and their knowledge to our traditional feelings and personal views, and to convey the whole to the heart of the nation.’[56] Addressing young Conservatives and local party activists, she recounted her own formative experiences campaigning on the door-steps of Leeds. Crisp explained how she discovered that the political intelligence of the majority of voters was ‘near to idiocy’.[57] Frustratingly, she wrote, ‘One sets out on the first essay full of ardour and enthusiasm, impatient to do

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[54] Crisp, *The rebirth of Conservatism*, p. 73.
[55] Ibid., pp. 77-8.
[56] Dorothy Crisp, ‘The heart of the nation’, *Ashridge Journal*, 7 (August 1931), p. 9. During the same period, Crisp also repeated the main ideas from her book in the periodical press, see Dorothy Crisp, ‘A demand for intolerance’, *English Review*, 53 (August 1931), pp. 313-20.
[57] Crisp, ‘The heart of the nation’, p. 8.

battle for the high cause of the Tory faith and the endless possibilities of English Imperialism. What one meets I have already described.'[58] But she concluded that it was every Conservative's responsibility 'to understand his fellow countrymen and to urge, persuade, and direct them, not only to rows of victors in Conservative rosettes beaming from balconies, but to the true Tory faith and the ancient loyalties, to the growth and exercise of their individualities and the service of God and King'.[59] Crisp raised Toryism above party politics because she recognised that there were now few advocates of it in Parliament.

A belief in Tory, as opposed to Conservative, values was shared by most of the young Conservatives who Crisp chose to publish in *The Rebirth of Conservatism*. Of the five essayists, H.E.S. Bryant Irvine, Treasurer of the University of Oxford Conservative Association, and J.D.F. Green, Chairman of the University of Cambridge Conservative Association, were right-wing Tories. Bryant Irvine was one of the founders of the English Mistery, a back-to-the-land, 'proto-fascist' movement led by Viscount Lymington in the 1930s.[60] Bryant Irvine's essay was on foreign affairs.[61] But he discussed the details of his Tory politics in the *National Review*. He argued that the Conservative party had moved in the wrong direction for half a century because it had adopted the wrong ideas from the left:

> It has accepted the bureaucratic ideal of the Socialist, to which Toryism is fundamentally opposed, and at the same time has ignored the real and patriotic causes which should unite not only the Socialist and Conservative Parties, but which should provide the foundation for the greater national unity. By abandoning its supreme duty to be humane, it has identified itself with the Liberal Party by providing the main justification for Socialist agitation.[62]

Bryant Irvine regarded policies like health and unemployment insurance as unfortunate attempts to patch up a divided society and he regarded the National Government as the climax of a divisive politics. He preferred 'the unity and development of the race' to 'the freedom and prosperity of the individual'. Universal suffrage, he wrote, undermined individual character, and 'a class of responsible leaders' was now needed to unite the nation. Bryant Irvine wanted a return to localised aristocratic leadership, which is why he lamented the rise of the plutocrat—money did not encourage loyalty or service.

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[58] Crisp, 'The heart of the nation', pp. 8-9.
[59] Ibid., p. 11.
[60] For a history of the English Mistery, see Dan Stone, *Responses to Nazism in Britain, 1933-1939. Before war and holocaust* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 169-174.
[61] H.E.S. Bryant Irvine, 'The search for world peace', in Crisp, *The rebirth of Conservatism*, pp. 195-6.
[62] H.E.S. Bryant Irvine, '1883 looks at 1933', *National Review*, 100 (February 1933), p. 242.

However, there were some differences between his and Crisp's Toryism. Bryant Irvine wanted to look to the House of Lords for leadership, but at the same time he condemned the quality of its personnel.[63] Echoing the politics of the English Mistery, he wrote, 'only sustained effort will re-create England. The effort should not be despised if its fruits cannot be enjoyed within ten years. Creation, if it is to achieve any degree of permanence, requires a sense of responsibility to future generations. It is usually only the farmer who has this quality: industrialism requires quick returns'.[64] The Mistery's long-term ambitions probably prevented the movement from gaining much ground with Tories on the right of the Conservative party. Bryant Irvine's arguments would certainly have failed to impress Crisp who was determined to bring about substantial change overnight.[65] Bryant Irvine also rejected John Marriott's arguments about the constitution.[66] His Tory faith rejected institutional safeguards because he desired a new wave of hereditary rulers, but Crisp's concern about rebalancing the constitution shows that she was not as radical and that she put at least some faith in the incumbent House of Lords.

J.D.F. Green also had connections with the English Mistery, though it is not known if he was a member of the movement. It is highly likely that he was, but it appears he remained a member of the Conservative party.[67] Green was by-far the most vociferous of the young Tories and, unlike Crisp, he proceeded to repudiate the entire politics of the Victorian age: 'To destroy Liberal thought is the task of Toryism, to attribute Liberal thought to Socialism is to destroy Socialism, and finally to destroy Socialism will be to liberate England to a large degree from the evils of hypocrisy. It will only be by realizing the truth about the nineteenth century world that the dawn of the future will break upon post-war England.'[68] Green was highly critical of Baldwinite Conservatism for 'maintaining the obsolete ideas of a discredited age' and he called for a return to pre-Victorian Tory politics. Like Bryant Irvine, Green drew parallels between socialism and Toryism at the expense of Liberalism: 'The plea for Nationalization, Rationalization, Amalgamation and the other demands of the modern

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[63] Bryant Irvine, '1883 looks at 1933', pp. 244-5. He repeated his claims about aristocratic leadership in two follow-up articles, see H.E.S. Bryant Irvine, 'Back to nobility', *National Review*, 100 (June 1933), pp. 778-86, and, 'Is the House of Lords noble?', *National Review*, 101 (October 1933), pp. 465-477.
[64] Bryant Irvine, '1883 looks at 1933', p. 246.
[65] Bryant Irvine, 'Back to nobility', p. 786.
[66] Ibid., pp. 778-9.
[67] He was Chairman of Cirencester and Tewkesbury Conservative Association in 1964-78.
[68] J.D.F. Green, 'Orthodox and paradox', in Crisp, *The rebirth of Conservatism*, p. 139.

world are clear indications of the gradual growth of collectivism at every corner of our individualist state, of a revolt against the unguided, unchartered freedom of Liberalism.' He shared Crisp's and Bryant Irvine's desire for a powerful aristocracy, which would guard Britain's cultural heritage and inspire the individual to do service for the nation.[69] He also wanted to reinforce the Established Church: 'It is utter defeatism to say that the age of religion has temporarily past; the age of national prosperity will pass for ever unless the Church reclaims the souls of her faithful.'[70] Finally, Green recommended altering the constitution by increasing the power of the House of Lords and developing committee work for secondary measures, but more unusually he wanted to increase the powers of the executive at the expense of the legislature: 'In an age which calls for quick decision and high policy it is preposterous to think that private members are still allowed to occupy the floor of the greatest administrative assembly in the world, discussing the extermination of rabbits, the gasworks of Glasgow, or even the education of canal children.'[71]

Green went on to write a highly critical account of Baldwin's leadership in 1933, which was dedicated to Viscount Lymington and the English Mistery.[72] It did not impress reviewers and the *Times Literary Supplement* drew attention to Green's potential support for fascism: 'He ladles out approval or censure with the confidence bred in him by a more or less fascist philosophy set out in his book with a cocksure snappiness by no means reassuring to the cautious reader.'[73] Green criticised Baldwin's aim of broadening the party's appeal on the basis that 'it has lost the criteria by which to differentiate a Whig from a Tory, or a careerist from a patriot'.[74] Whether Green desired Tory or fascist politics is almost irrelevant because it is highly likely he would have supported either if it had been able to emerge as an electoral force. His sympathy for 'action' was particularly evident when he compared Baldwin's politics with revolutionary movements abroad:

> He has watched a school of the right in Italy throw Mussolini into the curule chair of authority. In Germany a molten nationalism sizzles round the waiting moulds. Spain has revolted, and from Mustapha Kemel [sic: Mustafa Kemal] to Stalin the outer bounds of Europe have witnessed action. After two centuries of individualism

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[69] Green, 'Orthodox and paradox', pp. 147-9.
[70] Ibid., pp. 154-5.
[71] Ibid., pp. 156-7.
[72] John Green, *Mr. Baldwin. A study in post-war Conservatism* (London, 1933). Green also thanked Bryant Irvine 'for the painstaking way in which he has helped me with this book'.
[73] *Times Literary Supplement*, 27 April 1933.
[74] Green, *Mr. Baldwin*, p. 167.

> the quest of unity is afoot. Only in England, once the political leader of the world, is the public mind stagnant and defunct.[75]

He even admitted that his Toryism rejected democracy and public opinion altogether.[76] As a young Conservative, it is highly likely Green attended Ashridge, but he criticised it for being a liberal-Conservative venture, arguing that it did not fit his organic Tory view: 'It is a glaring instance of starting at the wrong end of the shafts. It is impossible to call an educational community into being. Every permanent institution must have growth…Its inception was due to liberal thinking.' He also argued, 'Neither the lecturers nor their audiences have the slightest intention of ever abandoning their individual idiosyncrasies or their democratic opinions.'[77] Green's eccentricity demonstrates how difficult it was to gain political coherence on the radical-right in the 1930s.[78]

Of the three remaining young Conservatives, none were extreme right-wing Tories. The most interesting was Eric Travers-Hutchin, President of the University of Glasgow Conservative Association, who it seems did not embark upon a political career. He was a Tory, but because he was based in industrial Glasgow, a city suffering from high levels of unemployment, and made famous for its red Clydeside politics, his ideas were noticeably more forward-looking than those offered by Crisp or supporters of the English Mistery. Travers-Hutchin rejected the restoration of aristocratic paternalism because his experience of working-class life in Glasgow suggested such a policy was wholly unrealistic:

> To return to landlordism, in our present industrial world, is impossible, and to tread even the first retrograde step would be disastrous. But to consider the merits of the old system; to see the way in which lairdship represented all classes, realizing the aims of each; to see the true nobility in both chief and clansman which resulted; all these things should inspire us to build up a new order. We need a democracy based, not on the cadging of odd votes, but on the furtherance of the aims and ideals of the best in every class.[79]

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[75] Green, *Mr. Baldwin*, p. 177.
[76] Ibid., pp. 171-84.
[77] Ibid., pp. 179-80.
[78] As shown in Chapter One, Green was head-hunted by John Reith for the BBC in 1934 and he worked for the BBC until 1962. Green established agricultural broadcasting in 1935, which would have pleased the English Mistery. David Hendy, in his recent history of BBC Radio Four, comments that Green did much to sustain Reithian traditions in the 1950s. See David Hendy, *Life on air. A history of Radio Four* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 153-4.
[79] Eric Travers-Hutchin, 'The future of Clydeside politics', in Crisp, *The rebirth of Conservatism*, p. 128.

Like Bryant Irvine and Green, he wanted to court working-class Labour voters rather than middle-class Liberal supporters because he recognised that they had more in common with the fundamental principles of Toryism. He was arguing a case for 'Tory democracy': 'Whilst the chief aim of many trade union leaders is to drive out capitalism; whilst many employers earnestly desire to break the trade unions; whilst the middle classes tend more and more to draw into their shell, refusing to show any interest in either workers or capitalists…we cannot hope for any true effort towards the solution of the problems which worry and hurt us.'[80]

W.F. Marshall Lang, President of the University of Edinburgh Conservative Association, similarly, did not embark upon a political career. His views were closest to Crisp's because he emphasised economic liberalism and individualism, but recognised an increasing role for the state in helping to shape national character. On industry, he wrote, 'Conservatism may be criticised as the policy which goes so far and no farther. That is so. It goes so far to help development, but not far enough to interfere with it, and if any concern is to justify its continuation it must be prepared to stand on its own merits.'[81] On social policy, he explained, 'A government can direct and legislate and refrain, to help the citizens of a country to help themselves. That is the first canon of the Conservative philosophy.'[82] But, unlike Crisp, Marshall Lang accepted democracy. He argued Conservatism believed in democracy because it strengthened individualism and character, while statist socialism undermined civil liberties.[83] Like Travers-Hutchin—another Scottish Conservative—Marshall Lang advocated a less reactionary form of Toryism compared to Oxbridge Conservatives, which legitimises Buchan's judgement of young Conservatives in 1932.

Only John Boyd-Carpenter, President of the University of Oxford Conservative Association, went on to enjoy a successful parliamentary career. Significantly, he distanced himself from the eccentric tones of Crisp, Bryant Irvine, and Green, choosing instead to support the National Government during the 1930s.[84] Like fellow Oxford graduate Quintin Hogg, Boyd-Carpenter had strong family political connections; his father Archibald Boyd-

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[80] Travers-Hutchin, 'The future of Clydeside politics', p. 134.
[81] W.F. Marshall Lang, 'Conservatism and the British character', in Crisp, *The rebirth of Conservatism*, p. 173.
[82] Ibid., p. 174.
[83] Ibid., p. 172.
[84] Although he did regularly attend Charles Petrie's 18 Club in 1939, which was founded exclusively for Oxford and Cambridge young Conservatives. See John Boyd-Carpenter, *Way of life. The memoirs of John Boyd-Carpenter* (London, 1980), p. 41.

Carpenter was still a Conservative MP in the 1930s.[85] In his essay, Boyd-Carpenter was chiefly concerned with retaining Britain's world power status, which he argued meant isolating herself from Europe while continuing to develop her Empire.[86] His imperialism also featured in an important broadcast for the BBC in January 1935. Boyd-Carpenter condemned political extremism both at home and abroad while putting his faith in Britain's parliamentary institutions rather than in its people. He argued, 'We have seen the worst passions in human nature let loose; things like persecution of men and women because of their race indulged in by supposedly civilised countries. You can't look at these facts and not be frightened. It is a queer mad world that you and I have got to face.'[87] His experience of contesting the London County Council seat of Limehouse as a Municipal Reform candidate in 1934 probably also influenced his attitude on race and political extremism; Mosley's BUF conducted anti-Semitic campaigns in the area. Boyd-Carpenter was loyal to Baldwin's leadership because he preferred moderation and, unlike Crisp—but even more unlike Bryant Irvine, Green, and the English Mistery—he was not willing to revive aristocratic paternalism and was disdainful of British fascism.[88] Boyd-Carpenter embraced parliamentary democracy and refused to contemplate a return to the politics of a pre-Victorian, Victorian, or Edwardian age.[89] Like Hogg, he seized his chance on the BBC to establish his mainstream and 'progressive' credentials. His imperialism seems to have been all he had in common with Crisp.

The Under Forty Movement

In July 1931 Crisp also corresponded with the Liberal Ernest Benn and the Friends of Economy—a City group campaigning for municipal and national economic retrenchment.[90] Benn was determined to uphold the principles of economic liberalism and individualism.

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[85] Archibald Boyd-Carpenter was Conservative MP for Bradford North (1918-23), Coventry (1924-29), and Chertsey (1931-37) until his death. He had held several ministerial positions in the early 1920s, including Financial Secretary to the Treasury under Stanley Baldwin before they fell out. See Boyd-Carpenter, *Way of life*, p. 11.
[86] John A. Boyd-Carpenter, 'The mastery of the seas', in Crisp, *The rebirth of Conservatism*, pp. 122-3.
[87] John Boyd-Carpenter, 'A plea for continuity', *The Listener* (16 January 1935), p. 100.
[88] Ibid., pp. 100-1.
[89] Ibid., p. 101.
[90] The movement's development and its impact on national politics can be traced through Williamson, *National crisis*, pp. 139-521.

Although he was a Liberal, he supported the Conservatives in 1929 because he thought they were more committed to individualism.[91] Apparently, it was Benn who suggested she help organise a movement of youth on behalf of the Friends of Economy.[92] Crisp was the mouthpiece and the most determined member of the group, which called itself the Under Forty Movement. She launched and publicised the movement in an article for the *National Review* in December 1931. The movement's organising committee included a number of young Conservatives and other members of Britain's established elite. The Earls of Feversham and Birkenhead, Lord Pentland, Tresham Lever, Lord Russell of Liverpool, and Quintin Hogg all sat on the committee.[93] Crisp suggested the movement 'work for the formation of branches in every town in the kingdom. From national, it hopes to pass to imperial affairs'.[94] Crisp and the Under Forty Movement desired permanent economic retrenchment rather than the temporary measures now being adopted by the National Government. She did not trust the emergency government to uphold its economic policies once the economy showed signs of recovery, so she repeated her case for low taxation, defending the 'wealthy man' on grounds that he was of 'far more mental and moral value

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[91] In 1923 Benn founded the book publishing company Ernest Benn Ltd. He introduced Benn's Sixpenny Library in the late 1920s; one of the precursors of the paperback. In 1926, with Sir Hugh Bell, Benn founded the Individualist Bookshop. He was leader of the Friends of Economy from 1931. See Benn's DNB entry, Deryck Abel, 'Benn, Sir Ernest John Pickstone, second baronet (1875–1954)', rev. Marc Brodie, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30704, accessed 5 Aug 2009].

[92] Crisp, *A life for England*, p. 73.

[93] Charles William Slingsby Duncombe, third earl of Feversham, was a Conservative peer. He was Lord-in-Waiting (government whip in the House of Lords), 1934-36, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, 1936-39. Frederick Winston Furneaux Smith, second earl of Birkenhead, was the only son of the prominent Conservative MP Frederick Edwin Smith (1872-1930), known as FE. Unlike his father, the second earl was a biographer and did not pursue a political career. Henry John Sinclair, second Baron Pentland, was the son of the former Liberal MP and Secretary of State for Scotland, John Sinclair. The second Baron was President of the Cambridge Union Society in 1929, and later Assistant Secretary at the Ministry of Production, and CPRB, Washington, 1944–45. He also had business interests as a Director of American British Electric Corporation (New York) and Hunting Surveys Inc. (New York). Tresham (Joseph Philip) Lever was called to the Bar in 1925. He contested South Hackney as a Conservative candidate in 1929, and he was High Sheriff of Leicestershire, 1962–63. He was mainly a publisher and author. His books included *Profit and loss; a brief consideration of some aspects of modern politics* (London, 1933) and *The life and times of Sir Robert Peel* (London, 1942). (Edward Frederick) Langley Russell, second Baron Russell of Liverpool, enjoyed a distinguished military career until he was forced to retire in 1930 from ill-health. Russell was called to the Bar at Gray's Inn (1931), but never acquired a substantial practice. Instead he became a military assistant to the judge advocate general (JAG) of HM forces (1934-43).

[94] Dorothy Crisp, 'The Under Forty Movement', *National Review*, 97 (December 1931), p. 785.

than his opposite'.[95] Bullish with her words, she professed, 'the young people…demand a drastic alteration both of attitude and of law'.[96] However, by the time her article was published events had already conspired to compromise the movement's potential. As Philip Williamson argues, movements such as the Friends of Economy, which did much to fuel the atmosphere of 'national crisis' in the autumn of 1931, moved quickly to support the National Government.[97] According to Crisp, this was why the Under Forty Movement quickly unravelled: 'The Friends of Economy were to have a great meeting in the City and, by the time they had all the details of the meeting arranged, the Socialist Government had been thrown out and the first "National" Government formed.'[98] Although the Friends of Economy rallied round the National Government, Crisp refused to comply and remained committed to the Under Forty Movement as a protest group.

But the writing was already on the wall in August 1931. The movement's *de facto* leader, Tresham Lever, rejected Crisp's attempts to intensify the movement's plans. Crisp planned to establish a series of mass meetings up and down the country, but Lever was reluctant: 'I think it best to proceed more cautiously. If we hold one large meeting here in London and we have not said too much about it before-hand, we can, if it should be a failure, let it drop quietly without hurt to our political reputations.'[99] The organising committee then called a meeting (perhaps tellingly) without her. They decided to stage a large-scale meeting in November at the Central Hall, Westminster. Crisp was prevented from speaking at the meeting, which she claimed was made up entirely of male speakers. She argued the movement predicted a crowd of 3,000 people: 'In the event, some 300 people turned up at the meeting and, with the exception of a lively effort by Quintin Hogg, the speeches resounding in the gloomy emptiness were probably and not unnaturally the dullest on record.'[100]

The committee were apprehensive about Crisp's active role in the movement, but after the dismal failure of the November meeting, Crisp convinced them to consider a new manifesto for publication, which she wrote herself. Part of the manifesto appeared in the *National Review* under Crisp's name, but the organising committee never endorsed its formal

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[95] Crisp, 'The Under Forty Movement', pp. 783-4.
[96] Ibid., p. 784.
[97] Williamson, *National crisis*, p. 521.
[98] Crisp, *A life for England*, p. 74.
[99] Ibid., p. 80.
[100] Ibid., p. 82.

publication, apparently fearful of Crisp's radical ideas. Alongside Conservative right-wing issues such as minimal state interference, individualism, low taxation, the abolition of death duties, and a reduction in the number of cabinet ministers, Crisp called for all unemployed men to be drafted into a territorial force until adequate work was found, the complete rejection of state insurance against unemployment and ill-health (only private insurance was to be welcomed), and the immediate and final abolition of the pauper vote. Crisp's final comments were the most controversial: 'It shall be a purpose of this movement from time to time to issue similar statements with regard to national and imperial affairs, and at all times and by all legitimate means to promote a great national uprising, in the finest spirit of the Regular and volunteer forces.'[101] Crisp's phraseology was unfortunate and it probably sounded worse than it was. This was virulent patriotic rhetoric, but it was not a call for fascist revolution. However, for young Conservatives like Hogg and Boyd-Carpenter, who intended to forge a successful parliamentary career, this sort of language was alarming. Explaining the downfall of the movement, Crisp wrote, 'By the end of 1931 I had sent copies of the manifesto…to all the members of the committee of the Under-Forty movement and, with the exception of Quintin Hogg—who wrote a long and sensible letter with which I thoroughly disagreed—they all behaved like the man in the parable.'[102] Hogg would have had little sympathy for Crisp's dim view of the working classes and her uncompromising support for property owners against tenants. He would also have found her political militarism unappealing, not to mention her warmongering when it came to the Empire and foreign policy.

Just a few years later, writing in the *Nineteenth Century and After*, Hogg outlined some of the features of his own Conservatism. He wished to implement a 'Labour charter and tenants' charter giving some certainty to the conditions of life among the working classes and a freedom from the capricious tyranny of a week's notice.' He backed strong military defences, but he desired 'Freedom from further obligations to fight.'[103] It is significant that young Conservatives who regarded themselves as 'Tories' in Crisp's sense failed to match the success of more moderate figures such as Hogg and Boyd-Carpenter. Quite simply, in most cases, Crisp's form of right-wing Toryism was no longer regarded as an electoral asset by the Conservative hierarchy. That it remained willing to accommodate such radical

[101] Crisp, 'The Under Forty Movement', pp. 783-5; and, *A life for England*, pp. 83-7.
[102] Crisp, *A life for England*, pp. 94-5.
[103] Quintin Hogg, 'National or Conservative?', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 116 (July 1934), p. 38.

opinion at youth level is therefore striking, and may suggest that, as Buchan's role implies, one factor was a determination to minimise youthful defections to outside radical movements.

Frustration, Desperation, and the Saturday Review

With the Under Forty Movement stalled, Crisp intensified her literary efforts to gather support for a mass patriotic movement.[104] In an article for the *National Review* in December 1932 she praised the efforts of two right-wing movements, a group calling themselves the Legion of Loyalists and the English Mistery. Her characterisation of the groups seemed to parallel her own unsuccessful efforts with the Under Forty Movement: 'They are unknown and unnoticed, or, in a few directions, decidedly unpopular, for they may be said to be out of sympathy, not only with the pompous idiocy of post-war years, but with the majority of the pampered Socialistic doctrines of the nineteenth century.'[105] Crisp claimed that her manifesto was circulated by the Indian Empire Society, which put her in contact with the Legion of Loyalists. Publicising the group, she wrote, 'In including Imperialism with religion and patriotism, these young men and women are typical of the general outlook of those under thirty.'[106] Of the English Mistery, Crisp explained, they 'are convinced that a crash must come, and that, generally speaking, one can only ignore the present, and work steadily, each by completing the Tory character within himself, for the rehabilitation of the country when the worst has come'.[107] Crisp never pledged her support to the Mistery because 'none of their work—which included a remarkable plan for reducing the National Debt—ever came to anything. I had no tears to shed over that for among their ideas, mainly taken in this instance at least from Ant[h]ony Ludovici, was that of male dominance in politics and public life, and I was not standing for that'. Crisp was also appalled by Ludovici's attacks on Christianity.[108] But Crisp's flirting with 'proto-fascist' movements symbolised both her political frustration

[104] Crisp, *A life for England*, p. 109.
[105] Dorothy Crisp, 'The battle of the young', *National Review*, 99 (December 1932), p. 742.
[106] Ibid., pp. 744-5.
[107] Ibid., p. 745.
[108] Crisp, *A life for England*, p. 76. For information on Anthony Ludovici's involvement with the English Mistery, see Stone, *Responses to Nazism*, pp. 156-8, 171-3. He was the movement's ideologue.

and the increasingly radical tone of her work for the periodical press. She now advocated violence against young socialists if they could not be convinced to join the patriotic right.[109]

It was around this time that Crisp started writing a weekly political column for the *Saturday Review*, which she sustained for three years until 1936. Lady Houston, the review's proprietor, was unaware of her role because Crisp wrote under the name of her friend, Thomas Polson. Crisp insisted her articles were often rejected by the *Saturday Review* because of her youth, which is why she approached Polson.[110] Ironically, although this gave Crisp a regular opportunity to publicise her ideas, the venture could not be used to build up a patriotic movement in her own name because the public was unaware that she was the author, although, occasionally, she did manage to publish under her own name as well. The ruse also under-scored the limits of her feminist sensibilities.

Crisp's work for the *Saturday Review* concentrated on three themes: economic liberalism and taxation, the constitution, and, Empire and foreign policy. Crisp was extremely consistent with her arguments regardless of whether she published under her own name or Thomas Polson's. Her economic liberalism set her apart from most of her Tory friends and she even referred to William Gladstone's record on finance as the model for the Conservative leadership to adopt in the 1930s. It is noticeable that her rhetoric became increasingly radical in keeping with the spirit of Houston's review. One must remember that to retain her role (and her steady income stream) she had always to satisfy the reactionary Houston, who used the *Saturday Review* to attack Ramsay MacDonald, Stanley Baldwin, and the National Government, but also to glorify fascist dictators. With this in mind, it is understandable that Crisp sought to make an immediate impression by calling for revolution, but we should recognise that her fundamental ideas did not change and that 'revolution' meant no more than the installation of a 'genuine' Conservative government.

From July 1933 Crisp criticised the National Government for ignoring the 'great suffering' of the middle classes who she claimed were being taxed out of all proportion.[111] This, she argued, would lead to the degradation of national character. Like Gladstone, she

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[109] Crisp, 'The battle of the young', p. 747.
[110] Crisp, *A life for England*, p. 119. Crisp's admission was published the same year as Polson's death (22 August 1946). Crisp's articles in the *Saturday Review* appear to confirm her claims because they do not differ in terms of overall tone or argument from the articles she published under her own name. Polson had been Chairman of Butlin's Ltd, Duffield Iron Corporation Ltd, James Walker, Goldsmith and Silversmith Ltd, Pye Ltd, and Rolls Razor Ltd. He was also a Director of Cairnton Trust and Finance Co. Ltd.
[111] Dorothy Crisp, 'The most bitter farce in history', *Saturday Review*, 156 (22 July 1933), pp. 90-1.

wanted to abolish income tax altogether: 'The quick creation of a true Conservative Party with true Conservative principles alone can save us, and a revolutionary attitude towards taxation is speedily demanded. We have reached to-day the amazing anomaly of discovering in Gladstone a truer Tory than any present-day politician, despite the many who wear the Conservative label.'[112] Crisp even threatened a middle-class tax-payers' revolution, comparing 1930s economic policy with the Ship Money controversy that preceded the English Civil War: 'Within one hour of the appearance of a Hampden or a Pym, England would be ablaze against them.'[113]

Crisp also condemned the Conservative party's views on housing. The level of her commitment to economic liberalism is demonstrated by the fact that she not only criticised Neville Chamberlain's housing policies in the 1920s, but also the more financially restrictive and market-orientated measures introduced by the National Government in the 1930s. According to Kevin Morgan, the National Government's policy was a noticeable 'return to that basic reliance on the private sector which had been Chamberlain's underlying aim'.[114] Nevertheless, Crisp was still drawing attention to the power of local authorities to provide subsidised housing in March 1934.[115] Crisp also criticised slum clearance because she believed it 'robbed' the honest hard-working labourer who still managed to improve and save from his/ her 'microscopic earnings'. Appropriating property provided 'houses of very doubtful value for persons who neither made nor ever intend to make an effort'. She historicised her view by arguing the policy was 'first legalised by the "Conservative" Government of 1924-29, in order to play for the votes of that ignorant but sentimentally-minded mass of semi-Socialists, the backwash of the Liberal teachings and professed humanitarianism of the nineteenth century'.[116] Like Hearnshaw, Crisp's anti-statist politics also targeted the Widow's and Old Age Pensions Act, introduced by Chamberlain in 1925.

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[112] Thomas Polson, 'The abolition of income tax', *Saturday Review*, 157 (21 April 1934), p. 436.
[113] Thomas Polson, 'Down the path to revolution', *Saturday Review*, 159 (27 April 1935), p. 523. On John Hampden's refusal to pay Ship Money and the lead up to the English Civil War, see David L. Smith, *A history of the modern British Isles, 1603-1707. The double crown* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 90-1.
[114] Kevin Morgan, 'The Conservative party and mass housing, 1918-39', in Stuart Ball and Ian Holliday (eds), *Mass Conservatism. The Conservatives and the public since the 1880s* (London, 2002), p. 61.
[115] Thomas Polson, 'Socialism gone mad', *Saturday Review*, 157 (31 March 1934), p. 349.
[116] Thomas Polson, 'Pirate government', *Saturday Review*, 159 (27 July 1935), p. 914. Crisp had already written about these issues in the periodical press, see Dorothy Crisp, 'Robbery by act of parliament', *National Review*, 102 (February 1934), pp. 218-24.

She accused Baldwin of introducing 'Socialism on a grand scale' and called for his immediate resignation.[117]

Another of Crisp's favoured subjects during the mid-1930s was the British constitution. Like Marriott, she criticised Baldwin's complacency: 'Mr. Baldwin vastly increased the importance of the Whips, by the innovation of promoting through them, thus greatly reinforcing the Party stranglehold on the individual.' But she also blamed Conservative MPs for not standing up to Baldwin and CCO.[118] Crisp argued that successive governments had continued to nibble away at the constitution since the 1911 Parliament Act, so that, 'there is no control at the centre of the British constitution, and the "High Court of Parliament" of former days continues to lose power, not only in comparison with the growth of an entrenched bureaucracy, but even with that of every uprising town and city council'.[119] Crisp was against any form of decentralisation in politics, especially when it came to running the economy, while she criticised the rule of committees and the delegating of powers to 'officials instead of men' because she considered these constitutional innovations 'socialistic' measures.[120] Simultaneously, she claimed the National Government was allowing Ministers to become autocrats. This, she wrote, undermined the constitution and the common law, not to mention the authority of the independent judiciary.[121] Answering those critics who argued that repealing the 1911 Parliament Act would lead to dictatorship, Crisp wrote, 'to obtain that repeal it is necessary everywhere to teach that dictatorship is not the alternative to democracy, but the result of it'. Frustrated, and with a hint of irony, she concluded, 'In England one can imagine no greater provocation to dictatorship than the desire to prevent a repetition of the careers of Messrs Baldwin and MacDonald.'[122]

Crisp still believed in Britain's 'civilising mission' of empire and she argued the country was 'specially appointed to lead the nations of the world'.[123] In December 1933 she seized upon the National Government's poor performance in a series of recent by-elections to draw attention to its lack of imperial endeavour; in fact, most Conservatives argued something approaching the opposite—that talk of rearmament and war was one of the main factors for

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[117] Thomas Polson, 'Stanley Baldwin, socialist', *Saturday Review*, 159 (3 August 1935), p. 969.
[118] Dorothy Crisp, 'Bringing M.P.'s to heel', *Saturday Review*, 158 (22 September 1934), p. 143.
[119] Thomas Polson, 'Impertinence of the L.C.C.', *Saturday Review*, 159 (15 June 1935), p. 743.
[120] Thomas Polson, 'Funk-hard Conservatives', *Saturday Review*, 157 (14 April 1934), pp. 399-400.
[121] Thomas Polson, 'This government's black record', *Saturday Review*, 160 (28 September), p. 231.
[122] Thomas Polson, 'Mr. Baldwin and blasphemy', *Saturday Review*, 160 (16 November), p. 457.
[123] Thomas Polson, 'England's duty is to lead', *Saturday Review*, 159 (1 June 1935), p. 681.

the government's defeats.[124] Crisp wrote, 'A third Labour Government would appear inevitable unless there is an immediate recognition, both by Conservative Members of Parliament and by all men and women who put King and Country first, of the grave dangers threatening our Imperial heritage through this creeping paralysis, this menace of Baldwinism.'[125] Crisp blamed Baldwin for Britain's 'cowardly' diplomacy with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Crisp acknowledged her reading of the Edwardian radical-right when she categorised both states as second-rate powers and argued, somewhat conspiratorially, that they could not be trusted, mainly because they would look for an opportunity to destabilise the Empire. When Mussolini announced conscription for all men aged between 8 and 55 years old, she called for an immediate return to military training.[126] A similar response was solicited in April 1935 when students in Berlin passed a resolution 'regretting that the Saar has been returned to us without the shedding of our blood'.[127]

Crisp's imperialism and her anti-Germanism probably prevented her from being interested in fascism both at home and abroad. She later admitted to attending a BUF meeting in March 1934 where she heard William Joyce speak about Mosley's fascist ideas.[128] There is no reason to think Crisp would have ever been interested in the BUF beyond her initial curiosity because she rejected their opposition to a dominant aristocratic House of Lords, their plans to adopt the Corporate State and public works schemes, and their plans completely to overhaul British society and culture. Quite simply, for Crisp the BUF's plans were too modern and in most cases unnecessary. Likewise, she showed little interest in Italian Fascism and German Nazism. When there was talk of Anthony Eden being allowed to cede parts of British Somaliland to Abyssinia at the bequest of the League of Nations in July 1935, Crisp thought it 'high time' the 'activities and the origins of the League of Nations Union were thoroughly investigated. Perhaps then we should arrive at some explanation of the remarkable number of Teutonic and Hebraic patronymics among the earliest donors of substantial sums to the Union'.[129] Racial prejudice was part of her suspicious attitude

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[124] See John Ramsden, *An appetite for power. A history of the Conservative party since 1830* (London, 1999), pp. 289-90.
[125] Thomas Polson, 'The menace of Baldwinism', *Saturday Review*, 156 (23 December 1933), p. 652.
[126] Thomas Polson, 'The strong man armed', *Saturday Review*, 158 (30 September 1934), p. 175. O.T.C's were Officers Training Corps, which usually had contacts with university education committees.
[127] Thomas Polson, 'Fallacies of pacifists', *Saturday Review*, 159 (6 April 1935), p. 425.
[128] Crisp, *A life for England*, pp. 131-2.
[129] Thomas Polson, 'This other Eden', *Saturday Review*, 159 (13 July 1935), pp. 872-3.

towards foreign powers. Crisp's belief in the inferiority of Italy and Germany led her to believe that Britain could dictate the terms of peace to both powers with the threat of violence.[130]

Edwardian Hangover or 'Proto-fascism'

Crisp's literary efforts and her attempts to 'reform' the Conservative party came to nothing and the same was true of her plan to inspire a mass patriotic movement to represent her idiosyncratic views. Her position was conceived in protest at Baldwin's willingness to mould his party's politics to an age of mass democracy, but in 1935 she was forced to resign herself to the success of Baldwin's electoral strategy: '[Baldwin and CCO] knew that in the approaching general election Conservatives could do no other than vote for them, lest utter damnation befall. When the choice lies between Mr. Stanley Baldwin and Sir Stafford Cripps, whatever the anger or contempt in our hearts, we can but act on the old saying, "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't know".'[131] In her memoirs, Crisp also displayed an apparently clear grasp of why her earlier efforts at winning over elite opinion failed:

> It may generally and accurately be conceded that the readers of The Times, the kindred newspapers and the reviews have in any event definite opinions and tendencies of their own, and buy those publications most generally in accordance with them, in order to have what daily information of the world reaches print, and to keep abreast with topics of current interest. An attempt to stampede such people would fail, if only because they resented it, and a campaign to rouse them could succeed only if it expressed their own attitude. Many of them are in touch with events through channels more intimate and certain than that of printed matter and have other mediums for the exchange of ideas. The Press may assist such opinion to crystallise; it cannot compose its essence.[132]

These comments stand as a perceptive analysis of the limits of her political and literary strategies in the 1930s. Crisp's efforts were crowded-out by a more moderate and successful anti-Labour effort. But unlike Mosley her main goal was always to win over elite opinion and to do so by building on traditional Conservative values. Refusing to concede defeat,

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[130] See Thomas Polson, 'The impossible League', *Saturday Review*, 160 (17 August 1935), pp. 45-6; Dorothy Crisp, 'Impose the Pax Britannica!', *Saturday Review*, 157 (21 April 1934), p. 855; and, Thomas Polson, 'Our pious humbugs', *Saturday Review*, 160 (10 August 1935), p. 11.
[131] Thomas Polson, 'Confound their politics', *Saturday Review*, 160 (2 November 1935), p. 393.
[132] Crisp, *A life for England*, p. 55.

Crisp argued the public's 'hearts yearn for the loyal and traditional policy of England and the Empire, the policy of the *Conservative and Unionist* Party, which is now so sparsely represented in the House of Commons by such Conservative stalwarts as Mr. Amery, Sir Henry Page Croft, [and] Colonel John Gretton'.[133] Her criticisms were always limited to achieving a 'genuine' Conservative government, whether that lay within the party itself or through other political channels.

Historians have seized upon Crisp's flirtation with violence and her relationship with the radical-right, including a number of fascists and 'proto-fascists'.[134] Like Mosley, Crisp did not register the post-war break with militancy and direct action, refusing to see the strategic rationale for Conservatives not to use the same militant tactics as the left to promote its causes. Baldwinite Conservatives correctly judged the public's newfound fondness for peaceableness and moderation and broke with the political 'rowdyism' of the Edwardian era.[135] Ultimately, it is on these terms that we must judge Crisp and others like her. They continued to advocate the political strategies of the Edwardian radical-right until the late 1940s despite their continuous failure to rouse the public's patriotic imagination. For all her crude patriotic rhetoric and political militancy, Crisp's politics were far too entrenched in Tory backwaters to envisage a modern fascist future that would bring Britain's cultural renewal.

What distinguished Crisp from her young Tory counterparts was her curious mix of 'old-Liberal' economics and individualism and a Conservative emphasis on the organic nature of the state. Crisp drew on two conflicting nineteenth century traditions which is why she

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[133] Polson, 'Confound their politics', p. 393.

[134] Campbell, *Iron ladies*, p. 80. Quoting the communist *Daily Worker*, Campbell draws attention to the violence and anti-Semitism at some of the British Housewives League's meetings. She also argues Mosley propaganda was on sale outside the hall at a meeting in June 1947. Crisp's publishing company also published work by the former BUF member A.K. Chesterton in 1944. The work was a play published under a pseudonym; see Caius Marcius Coriolanus, *No shelter for Morrison* (London, 1944). This is revealed in David Baker, *Ideology of obsession: A.K. Chesterton and British fascism* (London, 1996), p. 237.

[135] See Jon Lawrence, *Electing our masters. The hustings in British politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 71, 127-8. Lawrence also argues elections were more populist and disorderly during the Edwardian period than those of either the late Victorian or interwar era. One example of a right-wing Conservative MP who refused to abandon the use of violence in a general election was Patrick Donner who purposefully befriended Navy men to help steward his election meetings in Islington in 1931. Interestingly, Donner won what was understood to be an unwinnable seat, but CCO refused to support him in 1935. He was forced to relocate to a constituency capable of resisting the overtures of the Conservative party hierarchy who favoured a right-wing candidate; the constituency was Lord Lymington's former seat in Basingstoke. Patrick Donner, *Crusade. A life against the calamitous twentieth century* (London, 1984), pp. 64-81, 157-80.

struggled to abandon late-Victorian ideas. For Crisp, 'old-Liberalism' was always more representative of traditional Conservatism than Baldwinite Conservatism because it did not compromise with socialism. In fact, some elements of Crisp's politics might be termed 'proto-Thatcherite'. Her views on low (particularly direct) taxation, economic retrenchment, and property-ownership, her propensity for hard-work, her support for middle-class savers, and her preference for market-orientated housing schemes resembled Margaret Thatcher's politics in the 1980s. Crisp would also have sympathised with Thatcher's ambiguous view of society. As E.H.H. Green writes, Thatcher's famous comment in 1987, 'who is society? There is no such thing', has often been misunderstood. Green argues Thatcher never denied the existence of society, but she did object to its use as an abstract concept. Thatcher thought society equalled the important relationship between individuals and families—a 'neighbourly' approach that also valued the work of voluntary associations.[136] This comes close to matching Crisp's theory of society as a 'group of groups', but her endorsement of aristocratic paternalism meant she leaned more heavily towards an old-fashioned Tory view of society. Crisp was concerned about the potential abuse of liberal individualism and she was keen to avoid what modern-day political commentators refer to as 'a broken society'. So the comparison should not be laboured. If Crisp's minority voice belongs to a Conservative heritage that adhered to individualism and free-market economics long after their nineteenth century heyday, her refusal both to reconcile Conservatism to democracy and to adopt populist rhetoric to attract working-class voters distinguishes her from the more politically astute Thatcher, who achieved Crisp's dream of becoming Britain's first woman Prime Minister.

[136] E.H.H. Green, *Thatcher* (London, 2006), p. 43.

Chapter Six

Men of 'Action': Conservative MPs, Careerism, and the 'Corporate State'

Periodicals and books were not the preserve of the party's intellectuals. Conservative MPs wanted to tap, stimulate, and manipulate this discourse for their own ideological and personal ends. The two motives were indivisible since to be anyone at national level one had to be a coming man—and in a period of National Government, when fewer ministerial roles were available, this meant words rather than actions—despite the claims of John Vincent.[1] While most Conservative intellectuals did not have access to radio—Bryant was the exception—some Conservative MPs were able to combine an interest in 'old' and 'new' media in the 1930s. This heightened careerist ambitions because radio offered a new platform for MPs to demonstrate their potential by reaching out to a broader public. Nonetheless, if we exclude radio Conservative intellectuals and MPs occupied the same thought 'world'.[2]

The exclusivity of the periodical press was a major part of its appeal in the 1930s because it secured a limited but influential political readership. Conservatives could discuss the general public, electioneering, and internal party feuds without damaging their political careers. In contrast to later in the century, comments made by Conservative politicians were rarely reported in the national press or exploited by the Labour opposition. This academic extension of politics at Westminster played an important role in maintaining backbench loyalties to Baldwin and the National Government. It promoted 'languages of constitutionalism', but it also provided a platform for 'progressive' Conservatives to develop 'languages of corporatism'.[3] This was important because Conservatives diluted the impact of Mosley's claim to economic and political originality. Mosley struggled to gain access to radio and leading conservative periodicals, which is why he founded the *Fascist Quarterly* in January 1935.[4]

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[1] See Richard Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain. The politics and social upheaval of the 1980s* (London, 2009), p. 308.

[2] As indicated in earlier chapters, intellectuals listened-in despite not being asked to broadcast.

[3] Bill Schwarz, 'The language of constitutionalism: Baldwinite Conservatism', in *Formations of Nation and People* (London, 1984), pp. 1-18.

[4] Only the more 'respectable' BUF supporters like W.E.D. Allen gained access to prominent conservative periodicals. See W.E.D. Allen, 'The Fascist idea in Britain', *Quarterly Review*, 261 (October 1933), pp. 223-30. On Allen's politics and his relationship with the BUF, see Paul Corthorn, 'W.E.D. Allen, Unionist politics and the New Party', *Contemporary British History*, 23 (December

This chapter samples the ambitions, ideas, and writings of a small number of Conservative MPs who were interested in 'progressive' economic, political, and social change. Focussing on their corporatist thinking, it illustrates their level of engagement with elite media. However, it also shows how they used the subject to boost their careers. Other backbench Conservatives were critical of these men of 'action' because they reasoned that they were jeopardising the long-term good of the country for personal gain. These criticisms are discussed in Chapter Seven. The term 'action' was appropriated by Mosley in the 1930s, but it is useful here because most 'progressive' Conservatives responded to criticisms of the parliamentary system and party politics by suggesting new ideas for the National Government. They categorised these ideas as variously 'progressive', 'radical', or 'forward looking', but they were men of 'action' because this is how they sought to position themselves: as men capable of reinvigorating the National Government with 'active' policies. 'Progressive' Conservatives rivalled Mosley and Labour's intelligentsia, but most were fairly conservative at heart—portraying themselves as men of 'action' for party political reasons. They wanted to fashion themselves as 'coming men' by enhancing the government's reputation for dynamism and imagination, but they were sensitive about moving beyond the parameters of mainstream politics. They could not afford to threaten the status quo—the constitution, property, and Britain's economic order—if they wanted to advance their careers. This influenced their attempts to 'tame' corporatism and to make it 'British'.

The first section discusses Walter Elliot, whose appointment as Minister of Agriculture in September 1932 was probably more symbolic than historians have acknowledged. His career reinforced the perception that literary work could advance a Conservative MP's career. Agricultural reforms under Elliot were also vital because they were interpreted by the 'progressives' as examples of National Government 'action'. Section two focuses on Quintin Hogg who was searching for a constituency in this period. Hogg exposed the difficulties facing Conservative men of 'action' because he acknowledged the dichotomy between effective electoral tactics and 'progressive' Conservative politics. Sections three, four, and five discuss Lord Eustace Percy, W.S Morrison, and Hugh Molson. All three committed themselves to corporatist solutions as part of their plans to 'reorganise' industry. Percy and

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2009), pp. 509-25. The *Fascist Quarterly* was published between January 1935 and October 1936. It was later replaced by the *British Union Quarterly* between 1937 and 1940.

Morrison were motivated by their Christian consciences, but like Molson they were also looking for roles in a reconstructed National Government. Careerism was one important factor behind their loyalty to Baldwin and the British constitution. Percy, the intellectual figurehead of the group, was rewarded with office before the 1935 election.

Finally, one might ask, why Harold Macmillan does not feature here. One reason is that he has already received extensive attention from historians, but, more importantly, Macmillan was a maverick figure among Conservative 'progressives' because he openly espoused a cross-party reformist strategy.[5] As a publisher, he focussed more on books and pamphlets, but he wrote articles for *The Spectator* and occasionally broadcast for the BBC.[6] Interestingly, when Macmillan was asked to broadcast in July 1934 he admitted that his literary strategy was failing:

> Elsewhere in books and speeches I have tried to argue that we should recognise that these changes are bound to come, and take the necessary political action to enable us to coordinate the movements, and direct them in accordance with an intelligent plan of economic reconstruction…Propaganda may fail to secure it. The pressure of events will sooner or later force such action upon the leaders of the nation.[7]

Most of the 'progressives' sympathised with Macmillan, but they were not as committed to a comprehensive system of economic reorganisation as he was, which rightly or wrongly drew parallels with the Italian 'Corporate State'. Although some flirted with Macmillan's ideas they had reservations about the scope of his arguments. In the end they preferred a

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[5] See *The Times*, 24 October 1938. When the 'progressive' Conservative, Quintin Hogg, stood as a National Conservative candidate in the Oxford by-election in 1938 against an Independent Progressive (Popular Front) candidate, A.D. Lindsay, Macmillan called publically for all progressive opinion in Oxford to support Lindsay rather than Hogg. Granted, the election was fought mainly on Neville Chamberlain's foreign policy, but the incident was indicative of Macmillan's more rebellious attitude towards the Conservative party and the National Government in this period.

[6] On most occasions Macmillan was probably invited by the BBC as an independent expert on industrial matters because he was sometimes accompanied by an official Conservative speaker during programmes. On Macmillan, see Daniel Ritschel, *The politics of planning. The debate on economic planning in Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1997), especially pp. 183-279. The evolution of Macmillan's ideas and his main literary contributions are also discussed in E.H.H. Green, 'Searching for the middle way: The political economy of Harold Macmillan', in E.H.H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism. Conservative political ideas in the twentieth century* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 157-191. For a different approach see Simon Ball, *The guardsmen. Harold Macmillan, three friends, and the world they made* (London, 2004). Macmillan's main contributions in this period were, Harold Macmillan, *The next step* (London, 1932); *Reconstruction: a plea for a national policy* (London, 1933); *The middle way* (London, 1938); while he contributed heavily towards both *Planning for employment: a preliminary study by some members of parliament* (London, 1935) and *The next five years* (London, 1935).

[7] Harold Macmillan, 'Trade Unionism in the society of the future', *The Listener* (4 July 1934), p. 17.

conservative approach to solving Britain's economic problems because they wanted to preserve their reputations within the Conservative party and the National coalition. However, in taking the intellectual challenge of fascism seriously they committed themselves to British parliamentary democracy.[8]

Walter Elliot at the Ministry of Agriculture

In the early 1930s Walter Elliot was one of the Conservative party's rising stars and his reputation owed much to his political writing and broadcasting. His most important contribution was *Toryism and the Twentieth Century* (1927), which included a sympathetic introduction written by Stanley Baldwin. Elliot stressed the organic or biological nature of Toryism—characterising it as a philosophy of the right, descended from hundreds of years of human experience, which argued what once worked may work again.[9] As Colin Coote explained in his biography of Elliot, 'The book was in some quarters dismissed as the ejaculations of an exhibitionist…Nevertheless the book had some effect. It showed that the Tories could attract other than the Sir Leicester Dedlock type; that the Right could do better than plagiarise Socialism—that we were not "all Socialists now".' Elliot recognised the potential influence of his literary work and it was part of his strategy to become a future Conservative party leader. Coote agreed that the book 'had some effect on Walter's career'.[10]

To understand the evolution of Elliot's political thinking it is important to understand his flirting with non-democratic ideas in 1930. Elliot rejected claims that Parliament should be overhauled or strengthened because he did not think it was to blame for recent criticisms of Britain's political system. Writing in the leftist *Political Quarterly* he argued that it was the

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[8] Another political figure whom I have written about extensively elsewhere is Duncan Sandys. His British Movement sought to appropriate corporatism and 'progressive' politics as part of its attempt to rival Mosley's BUF with an alternative right-wing Conservative/imperial politics. See Gary Love, 'The British Movement, Duncan Sandys, and the politics of constitutionalism in the 1930s', *Contemporary British History*, 23 (December 2009), pp. 543-58. The movement's propaganda specifically stressed how it was determined to get 'action' without sacrificing British liberty. See British Movement pamphlet, c.1934, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Harold Macmillan papers, MS. Macmillan dep.c.85, fols.43.

[9] A review of Elliot's work appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 November 1927. See Walter Elliot, *Toryism in the twentieth century* (London, 1927).

[10] Colin Coote, *A companion of honour. The story of Walter Elliot in Scotland and in Westminster* (London, 1965), pp. 100-1. Sir Leicester Dedlock was a fictional character, an old-fashioned aristocratic Conservative in Charles Dickens, *Bleak house* (London, 1853).

party system and democracy rather than executive government, which stripped Parliament of its power and influence. Elliot could not ignore 'the literal catastrophe of General Elections':

> It is scores of thousands of local party Committee-men who control Parliament, it is the hundreds of thousands of canvassers and workers without whom no man or woman can gain or hold his seat…It is the club [party politics] that overawes the ordinary Member and not the Prime Minister's dissolution. And this club is, in fact, Democracy…Whether democracy be good or evil is a question far outside the range of any article such as this. But that is the question which has to be settled.[11]

Elliot preferred strong government: 'Increased subjection of the Executive to Parliament is, in fact, increased subjection of the Treasury to the electorate. Is that the ideal to which we should strive?' He noted how other countries were adopting totalitarianism because 'they found a need for something which no Parliament would ever give them'. He was not optimistic about the future because he believed the country's youth wanted a similar unifying ideal: 'It is still doubtful whether our younger generations are about to regard the parliamentary state as such an ideal. Its lack of directing continuity alone would be a heavy negative factor.'[12] Elliot's lack of 'directing continuity' pointed towards the potential advantages of dictatorship and economic planning.

Interestingly, he praised Mosley's manifesto in a letter to *The Times* in December 1930.[13] He agreed with Mosley on tariffs, inter-imperial planning, and the need for a smaller cabinet. He also agreed that the settling of wage disputes was central to economic progress. Controversially, he even accused Mosley's opponents (including the Conservative leadership) of halting 'the nation at a dead centre'.[14] Baldwin was furious, but when Elliot apologised, stressing the 'national' motives behind his attempts to establish peace between capital and labour, he forgave him: 'I may have doubted your wisdom. But fundamentally you share my outlook…and unless we can inoculate our party we perish. I look on you as

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[11] Walter Elliot, 'The inefficiency of parliament (II). A reply from the floor of the House. The blind man talks to the deaf', *Political Quarterly*, 1 (July-September 1930), pp. 362-3, 366-7

[12] Ibid., 364-7.

[13] Mosley later acknowledged that Elliot's letter was helpful to him at the time. See Oswald Mosley, *My life* (London, 1968), p. 273.

[14] Coote, *A companion of honour*, p. 117. *The Times*, 11 December 1930. Elliot also wrote in private about the potential for forming an alternative cabinet with Mosley, Robert Boothby, and Oliver Stanley. He even expressed an interest in rallying the working classes against the 'old gangs' of British politics. See Walter Elliot to Blanche Dugdale, 15 October 1930, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Walter Elliot papers, Acc.12267/12.

one of the torchbearers in the years to come.'[15] Elliot was ambiguous in his attitude to democracy, but Baldwin's recognition of him as a future cabinet minister was important because it gave Elliot and other 'progressive' MPs the impression that their ambitions could be fulfilled from within the Conservative party.

Elliot's reputation for 'progressive' politics and his awareness of public opinion in an age of mass democracy singled him out as an asset for Baldwin. But as Elliot revealed in a private letter to his future wife Katherine Tennant, the election of a National Government marked another important watershed in his career: 'Political work and party are a nuisance—but I do not complain about that. To move forward with 8 million voters means a slow shuffle, but it works. And where is Tom Mosley now? Splinter parties are the negative of decision.'[16] This shift of tone was evident when he was asked to broadcast on the subject of 'The Parliamentary Machine at Work' in September 1932. Elliot romanticised Parliament, glorifying its role as the critical voice of the nation: 'Do not, therefore, run it down wantonly because it is talk, for that means objecting to criticism because you can hear it. Furthermore, do not object to talk in Parliament because the talkers do not immediately bring forward what are called "constructive proposals," which is to say, another way of doing the same thing.'[17] This was an attempt to nullify extremist critics like Mosley who argued the House of Commons was little more than a 'talking shop', but also Labour critics who wanted the National Government to do more on unemployment. The broadcast was delivered three weeks before his appointment as Minister of Agriculture, which confirmed his 'fitness' for government. Ironically, Elliot would go on to be the most radical minister in the National Government and he would market his agricultural policies as constructive proposals. The election of a National Government appeased most of Elliot's concerns about democracy because he now accepted that the pace of reform would have to be evolutionary, but his defence of Parliament was consistent with his view that it should remain the weaker partner in governing the nation.

After the cabinet reshuffle in 1932, John Buchan, a supporter of innovative economic and social policies, summed up the feelings of most 'progressives' when he judged, 'The one

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[15] Quoted in Coote, *A companion of honour*, p. 118. The letter from Baldwin is published in full, dated 23 December 1930. Interestingly, W.S. Morrison advised Elliot on drafting an apology to Baldwin.
[16] Quoted in Coote, *A companion of honour*, p. 119. It would seem that some letters have gone missing from Elliot's private papers since Coote wrote his biography.
[17] Walter Elliot, 'The parliamentary machine at work', *The Listener* (7 September 1932), p. 335.

really good appointment is Walter Elliot to Agriculture.'[18] Elliot's appointment was vital because it helped retain 'progressive' Conservative confidence in the National Government. His work as Minister of Agriculture mirrored his attitude to democracy and his preference for more state intervention in economic affairs. The foundations for the government's agricultural policies were already in place by September 1932, but under Elliot's direction marketing schemes assumed more importance.[19] This was because he admitted in public that his policies resembled those of the Italian 'Corporate State', which created unwelcome publicity for the government. Elliot was then forced to distance himself and the government from fascism and dictatorship.[20] As Minister he made eight broadcasts promoting agricultural marketing schemes during 1933-34.[21] Aware that his ideas were influenced by the Fascist regime, he focussed on the English 'tradition' of appropriating the best continental ideas for the agricultural industry. He drew parallels with Arthur Young and William Cobbett, explaining to listeners that if they could pioneer agricultural reforms then he should be left to do the same.[22] This reflected the sentiment of *Toryism and the Twentieth*

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[18] John Buchan to Violet Markham, 4 October 1932, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, John Buchan papers, 1st Baron Tweedsmuir, Acc-7214, Mf.MSS.306. For a good example of Buchan's 'progressive' credentials see his pamphlet on social policy. John Buchan, *Principles of social service. Address by John Buchan to the students of the University of Glasgow during social service week* (Glasgow, 1933), pp. 1-16. Buchan put forward a case for a Christian view of social service, which Lord Eustace Percy also found appealing.

[19] The second Labour administration had implemented the first Agricultural Marketing Act in 1931, despite Conservative opposition, and the National Government introduced the Wheat Act in 1932. See Mathew Hilton, *Consumerism in twentieth-century Britain: the search for a historical movement* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 129-33. Coote, *A companion of honour*, pp. 133-4. However, Elliot's own Agricultural Marketing Act of 1933 was more far-reaching. It regulated the total supply of goods and restricted the number of imports; in other words it was more corporatist. For a discussion of these issues, see Andrew Fenton Cooper, *British agricultural policy, 1912-36. A study in Conservative politics* (Manchester, 1989), pp. 160-83.

[20] Elliot was constantly comparing his and the National Government's policies to those of Fascist Italy in this period. For example, when Neville Chamberlain announced his budget in April 1934, Elliot commented 'it is big stuff—and compares very favourably with Mussolini's cuts announced same week'. Walter Elliot to Blanche Dugdale, 17 April 1934, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Walter Elliot papers, Acc.12198/4.

[21] Walter Elliot, 'The New Policy for the Pig Industry', *The Listener* (8 March 1933), p. 380; 'What Trade Agreements Mean to the Farmer', *The Listener* (24 May 1933), p. 805; 'The Pigs Marketing Scheme', *The Listener* (5 July 1933), p. 30; 'How Would the Milk Scheme Work?', *The Listener* (23 August 1933), p. 282; Twentieth-Century Rural Rides', *The Listener* (4 October 1933), p. 506; 'Whither Britain', *The Listener* (28 March 1934), p. 509; 'Then and Now at the Highland Show', *The Listener* (4 July 1934), p. 32; 'New Organisation in British Agriculture', *The Listener* (5 December 1934), p. 936.

[22] Elliot, 'Twentieth Century Rural Rides', p. 596. Young, an agricultural reformer and writer, travelled extensively across Europe in search of new agricultural innovations between the 1780s and 1790s. He also advocated corn duties and was instrumental in setting up the first government board of

Century, but it was mostly shrewd politicking by Elliot who did not normally stress the 'Englishness' of his ideas in elite media.[23]

In official Conservative publications Elliot was keen to answer critics of state interventionism: '[T]hough some people may regret what they call "interference", it is nothing to the interference which might have ensued if agriculture had collapsed altogether or had been reorganised on a cast-iron Socialist principle'.[24] At the same time, he was chosen to conclude the BBC's 'Whither Britain' series. This was a coup for Elliot, who was probably selected by the Conservative leadership because he was the most 'active' Conservative minister. After all, the series was partly a response to the rise of political extremism in Britain. Elliot stated, 'There is a revolution and we are in it. What is more, there is a revolution and we are doing it. Our job in Britain is to do the revolution and do it better than anyone else.' He stressed the importance of a national approach, which meant cross-party co-operation, and his rhetoric matched Baldwin's oratory: 'As the scripture says—if I do not love my brother whom I have seen, how shall I love God whom I have not seen?' This was good National Government propaganda, but he signalled his preference for state intervention and was keen to convince the general public and his peers of the worthiness of the sacrifices they would now have to make. He compared corporatism with his desire for peace abroad: 'If you ask me where I stand, I say I stand for organisation at home, which is to say that I am willing to give up a certain amount of liberty for a reasonable amount of security; and I stand for Collective action abroad, which is to say that I am willing to give up a certain amount of peace for a reasonable amount of justice.'[25] Corporatism was sold as a moderate act of compromise.

Elliot's broadcasts were critical of revolutionary politics abroad, but he failed to mention Fascist Italy. However, in June 1934, after the BUF's infamous Olympia meeting, *The Times* reported comments he made in Germany:

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agriculture in 1793. Cobbett, the radical political writer and farmer was equally distressed by the state of rural farming and campaigned for agricultural innovations in the 1820s.

[23] Although on one occasion he did present his sympathy for strong government as a product of 'Scottishness' to help quell the Scottish nationalist movement in the 1930s. See Walter Elliot, 'Politics', in *A Scotsman's heritage* (London, 1932), p. 64. The other contributors to the volume were the Duke of Atholl, D.Y. Cameron, George Gordon, J. Graham Kerr, Lord Macmillan, and Charles L. Warr.

[24] Walter Elliot, 'The reorganisation of agriculture', *Politics in Review* (January-March 1934), p. 5.

[25] Elliot, 'Whither Britain', p. 509.

> [T]he corporative state in England will neither want dictatorship as a basis of government nor will it lead towards it…If one wants to introduce a new thing in this country one must do it as if it were an old thing. One must prove that the idea and the plan which one tries to promote has already worked successfully in a certain branch of trade or in some particular part of the country before one can get it generally accepted.[26]

Elliot viewed his agricultural initiatives as test-cases for broad economic reorganisation and he drew on concepts of 'national character' and 'Englishness' to convince others about the benefits of his plans. But his discussion of the 'Corporate State' seemed to show that he secretly viewed his policies as radical foreign innovations, which he was re-packaging to convince the public. His comments would be used against him during the 1935 election campaign.[27]

Elliot had publicly demonstrated his affinity for the Italian 'Corporate State' in his forward to Harold Goad's and Muriel Currey's book, *The Workings of a Corporate State* (1933). Elliot maintained that you could separate the Fascist revolution from the 'Corporate State', which he argued was Mussolini's 'successor'. This implied Britain could avoid Fascist Italy's preliminary dictatorship. He showed considerable sympathy for the Italian 'experiment': 'There are those who say that the degree of organization and discipline which these new states demand is so great that it destroys for them the very savour of life. The dry bones of organization can be very dry. The Italian feat is that in Latin hands the dry bones come together, clothed [sic—tense shifts] themselves with flesh and become a mighty army…The savour of life does not seem to have been lost for them.'[28] These bold comments suggest that Elliot remained confident that elite and popular discussion could be neatly compartmentalised.

Elliot explained the procedure of agricultural marketing schemes (as well as his own Agricultural Marketing Act) for the Royal Empire Society Summer School in July 1933. Surprisingly, he remarked, 'These are very novel introductions into the legal system of Great Britain, and have not, I think, received anything like the attention they deserve from students

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[26] *The Times*, 25 June 1934.
[27] This is discussed in more detail below.
[28] Harold E. Goad & Muriel Currey, *The working of a corporate state. A study of national co-Operation* (London, 1933), pp. 5-9. The book was published in November and it was a product of a discussion group in London chaired by Charles Petrie. It is possible that Elliot was a member of the group, but we do not know for certain. The group was extremely sympathetic to the Fascist regime as it cooperated with several Italian ministries.

of constitutional history.'[29] But if Elliot was comfortable explaining the radical nature of his policies to elite audiences, after the negative publicity relating to his comments in Germany he was keen to stress the democratic sentiment behind the schemes for BBC listeners: 'One of the teachings of democracy is that it is better for people to run a show for themselves than to have others to run it for them. Moreover, this democracy is functioning. It is acting, not merely arguing how to act. Democracy typifies cooperation, and the essence of the new outlook on agriculture is cooperation.'[30]

Elliot did not recognise a connection between his agricultural policies and dictatorship, but other Conservatives drew on his policies to tease political extremists like Stafford Cripps in the 1930s. In January 1934 Buchan was asked to introduce Cripps at a dinner in Durham. Buchan agreed with many of Cripps' criticisms of Parliament and he compared Cripps' ideas with those of Winston Churchill and Eustace Percy.[31] But like Elliot he was candid about the influence of Fascist Italy:

> Sir Stafford has told us that he detects the coming of what he calls a kind of country-gentleman Fascism. I am not at all certain that he is not right. There are many of us who would be glad to see some attempt to integrate the State more closely, and to give the citizen a more direct interest and responsibility in government. That is the valuable element in the great experiment now being made in Italy, and it has nothing to do with any doctrinaire theories of dictatorship. It is being attempted today in at least one good industry, and it is country-gentleman in so far as it draws its inspiration from the Minister of Agriculture…May I repay his [Cripps'] kindness in coming here tonight by giving him a tip? A professed revolutionary will be apt to fail because he will arouse suspicion at the most critical moment. A wise revolutionary should be a Tory, for if he is a Tory he wont be suspected.[32]

Elliot and Buchan were not advocating fascism, but they left themselves open to the charge by drawing on the Italian 'Corporate State' for inspiration.

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[29] Walter Elliot, 'Agriculture and the New Age', *United Empire*, 25 (September 1934), p. 537.
[30] Elliot, 'New Organisation in British Agriculture', p. 936.
[31] He was referring here to Churchill's comments in his famous *Romanes* Lecture. See Winston S. Churchill, *Thoughts and Adventures*, pp. 229-244. Percy's ideas are discussed below.
[32] Speech by John Buchan at the Durham Dinner, 26 January 1934, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, John Buchan papers, 1st Baron Tweedsmuir, Acc-7214, Mf.SS.312. Buchan was extremely sympathetic to 'progressive' economic and social politics. In a letter to the left-wing author J.B. Priestley, he explained, 'I was delighted, too, to find your political creed very much the same as mine. I believe profoundly in the progressive socialisation of the state, but the vital thing must always be the preservation of the spiritual integrity of the individual. This is why I could never call myself a Socialist in the ordinary sense.' John Buchan to J.B. Priestley, 26 May 1937, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, John Buchan papers, 1st Baron Tweedsmuir, Acc-7214, Mf.MSS.310. Buchan had just read Priestley's book *Midnight on the desert* (London, 1937).

A private letter written by Elliot to Baffy Dugdale confirms the extent to which electoral and party political calculations motivated his interest in adopting 'progressive' politics. Elliot admitted that many of his agricultural marketing schemes were unpopular in the countryside, but also in the towns where he confirmed 'the "dear food" cry is taking affect'. However, the public's animosity to his schemes did not disturb him because he was confident about the positive impact the government's interventionism would have on voters at the next election: 'Personally I think I shall last out. I think we shall hold a great many of the County seats which otherwise would have been lost.'[33] Referring to Conservative MPs who represented clusters of villages across Britain, he assured Dugdale, 'These are the people who will have to look to me'. He also stressed the importance of new ideas and political action to boosting his own leadership ambitions: 'The young men like the Athenians always desire some new thing. This is the difference between the plan and the building. Lots of people admire the plan—some the building. I am between while I am digging the foundations.'[34] So Elliot reasoned that once his marketing schemes showed signs of success he would be looked upon by young 'progressive' Conservatives as a serious contender for the party leadership. He agreed that his policies would make or break his career: 'Time will tell [if]…I am a leader. Whether I am the leader…wont be tested in prosperity but in adversity.'[35]

The inherent dangers of Elliot's elite literary strategy can be seen from Labour's tactics at the 1935 election. Hector McNeil, Elliot's Labour opponent at Glasgow Kelvingrove, made the minister's corporatist remarks the cornerstone of his campaign. McNeil labelled Elliot a self-avowed fascist and pledged 'to uphold democracy and all its powers and

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[33] Walter Elliot to Blanche Dugdale, 17 November 1934, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Walter Elliot papers, Acc.12198/4. Although he was angered by Robert Boothby's criticism of the Milk scheme in public, see Walter Elliot to Blanche Dugdale, 28 December 1934, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Walter Elliot papers, Acc.12198/4. Elliot had some reason to be confident. As the Conservative MP Arnold Wilson revealed in his survey of political opinion in Hitchin, which incorporated strong agricultural interests, most farmers were critical of Elliot's marketing schemes but this was normally because they wanted the government to do more on meat products. Some farmers clearly valued the government's active attempts to reorganise British agriculture. See Arnold Wilson, *Walks and talks. The diary of a member of parliament in 1933-4* (Oxford, 1934), pp. 6-8, 29, 36-7, 45-8, 136, 143-5.

[34] Walter Elliot to Blanche Dugdale, 17 November 1934, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Walter Elliot papers, Acc.12198/4. Hugh Molson also confirmed that some Conservatives looked towards Elliot because of his propensity for 'action', see Hugh Molson, 'Parties in conference 1. Conservatives at Bristol', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 116 (November 1934), p. 475.

[35] Walter Elliot to Blanche Dugdale, 17 November 1934, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Walter Elliot papers, Acc.12198/4.

implications' in his election propaganda.[36] Elliot was forced to refute claims he was a fascist on the platform just two days before the poll.[37] The *Glasgow Herald* reported an extremely high level of rowdyism and heckling at Elliot's election meetings. One journalist argued that he 'had perhaps the stiffest task' of all the government's candidates in Glasgow.[38] Elliot's constituency was a marginal seat and he scraped to victory by just 149 votes.[39] It had been feared that the interjection of a Samuelite Liberal candidate would split the anti-socialist vote in Kelvingrove, but Henry George Rae's candidacy failed to gain momentum.[40] His attempt to label Elliot 'a food dictator' failed because Liberal leaders had voted for the Wheat Act in 1932.[41]

If Elliot's views on corporatism failed to unseat him in Glasgow—a socialist stronghold—it was perhaps because the subtleties of Conservative public discourse helped convince the electorate that there was nothing to fear. The socialist newspaper *Forward* made no use of Elliot's 'fascist' leanings during the election campaign.[42] If the claims of McNeil had been credible, *Forward* would not have missed its chance to exploit the issue since the ideological battle between fascism and socialism was a recurrent theme in the paper. In less challenging constituencies across Britain, these flirtations with corporatism probably aided the Conservative party because it allowed candidates to showcase government 'action' alongside Baldwin's unifying rhetorical appeal. The existence of a Conservative public debate on corporatism prevented disaffected Conservatives from leaving the party by allowing them to voice their concerns about the future, and here Elliot's work at the Ministry of Agriculture was central to Conservative debate.

Simon Ball dismisses the argument that Elliot's rejection of Mosley during his New Party days can be linked to careerism. Ball writes, 'This is merely to accept a Fascist

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[36] Hector McNeil's official Labour party 1935 general election flyer, Kelvingrove division, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Walter Elliot papers, Acc.12267, Box 7, F3.
[37] *Daily Record and Mail*, 12 November 1935, p. 3. This was a pro-Government newspaper, see *Nineteenth annual issue of the newspaper press directory. An advertiser's guide* (London, 1935).
[38] *Glasgow Herald*, 14 November 1935, pp. 6, 12. At one meeting a teenage girl tried to pour a jug of water over Elliot.
[39] The election was subject to a recount, which guaranteed it substantial publicity in the local and national press. At one stage it was thought Elliot led the poll by just two votes until another ballot box was found.
[40] *The Evening Times*, 14 November 1935, p. 1.
[41] *Glasgow Herald*, 13 November 1935, p. 14.
[42] For criticism of agricultural policies without mention of Elliot, see *Forward*, 9 November 1935, p. 4. Other newspapers with working class readerships such as the *Glasgow Observer and Catholic Herald* did not discuss Elliot either.

narrative'. He suggests that 'The Tories were "honest opportunists"' even if their decisions formed 'part of a political deal.'[43] To some extent Ball is correct, but Elliot did not abandon his sympathy for Mosley or political 'action' in 1930. Elliot compromised because he thought Baldwin and the Conservative party would enhance his career. He sensed that he could lead a far more powerful political force than Mosley could attract. Elliot's commitment to democracy remained ambiguous, despite his attempts to disguise his evolutionary corporatism.[44] But this is probably why he was highly-valued by Baldwin. So long as Elliot could be secured, he represented the ideal spokesman for agriculture. Elliot marketed the government's policies as democratic and revolutionary endeavours and in the process he appropriated Mosley's rhetoric of 'action'. If Elliot's motives were careerist then Baldwin manipulated his dynamism. This strengthened the National Government's credibility amongst young Conservatives.

Quintin Hogg's 'Young England'

Quintin Hogg was a young Conservative who admired Elliot's corporatism. He also focussed on developing a 'safe' alternative to Mosley's politics and like many Conservatives he accepted the need to respond to Mosley's rhetoric of 'action' because he agreed with Mosley's criticisms of the 'old gang' in British politics. Hogg, who chose 'radical', 'progressive', or 'forward-looking' to categorise his views, did not become an MP until the Oxford by-election in 1938, which was fought on the government's policy of appeasement. In the early 1930s Hogg combined a prize fellowship in law at All Souls with a legal career at the Bar, but politics was his main ambition and it was through his literary work that he tried to establish his reputation as one of the party's rising stars. A series of articles for the periodical press were followed by an invitation from the BBC to contribute to its 'Whither

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[43] Simon Ball, 'Mosley and the Tories in 1930: the problem of generations', *Contemporary British History*, 23 (December 2009), p. 456.

[44] For another view of Elliot's corporatism, see Cooper, *British Agricultural Policy*, pp. 179-84. Cooper argues that Elliot would have implemented the 'Corporate State' in Britain in full had he had things all his own way. Instead, Elliot's policies were later modified because of the sceptical views of other leading Conservative cabinet ministers such as Neville Chamberlain who developed concerns about the performance of agricultural marketing acts. Chamberlain preferred an empirical approach rather than systematic organisation, but he was also more focused on securing preferable trade agreements with foreign countries, which he believed was the more effective route to economic recovery.

Britain' series in 1934. According to his father Lord Hailsham, Hogg was invited because he was seen by the BBC as a 'representative of youth'.[45] This may explain why the BUF identified him as a potential recruit.[46] Hogg's first publication in the 1930s appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*. 'Young England, 1933' was a conscious homage to the Conservative Young England movement of the 1840s—as discussed by Benjamin Disraeli in his novels, *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred*.[47] Hogg sought to quash myths about the best of British youth being killed in the First World War.[48] He claimed there was no such thing as a 'younger generation' with a homogeneous identity. Hogg argued this myth fed an 'illusion of Disillusion', which was turning Britain's youth towards political extremism.[49]

Like Disraeli, Hogg sensed an opportunity to outline a Conservative future, which could attract Britain's youth. As noted, Hogg flirted with Dorothy Crisp's Under Forty Movement, but he rejected Crisp's increasingly right-wing agenda and her strict adherence to economic liberalism. When he began to define what he believed Conservatism should mean in a modern age his ideas contrasted more starkly with Crisp's. Central to his Conservative outlook was his critique of modernism, which he argued did not represent a new political or moral philosophy capable of inspiring Britain's youth. He wrote, 'Free Love, Militant Atheism and Surrealism—Gauguin, Epstein, T.S. Eliot, Wells, Shaw, all these are essentially pre-war, most of them essentially Victorian.'[50] As Hogg explained, 'action' and 'experience' were now the watchwords of British political culture, which could not be ignored. He argued modernism was partly responsible for the post-war rise of fascism and communism. What was needed was a 'new breeze of Idealism' and although he failed to explain what this was, it was not fascism.[51]

Evidently it was a reinvigorated form of 'Tory democracy', which sought to merge corporatist ideas with the core values of British parliamentary democracy. It was Elliot who

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[45] Geoffrey Lewis, *Lord Hailsham. A life* (London, 1997), p. 40.
[46] Martin Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!' Fascists and fascism in Britain between the wars* (London, 2005), p. 147.
[47] Paul Smith, *Disraeli. A brief life* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 57-9.
[48] For other examples of Conservatives who disputed the idea of a 'lost generation', mainly in opposition to Mosley's manipulation of it as part of his attack on the 'old gang', see Ball, 'Mosley and the Tories in 1930', pp. 448-9.
[49] Quintin Hogg, 'Young England, 1933', *Cornhill Magazine*, 148 (1933), pp. 416-23.
[50] Ibid., pp. 416-7.
[51] Ibid., p. 423.

inspired Hogg's corporatism.[52] In a series of articles for the *Nineteenth Century and After* in 1934, Hogg developed and promoted the ideas of the party's 'coming men' (Elliot, Duff Cooper, Anthony Eden, Donald Somervell, and Oliver Stanley). At the same time, he discussed the party's election prospects. Hogg's comments reveal a discrepancy between his own career ambitions, which relied on identifying himself with 'progressive' Conservatism, and his analysis of the electoral imperatives for the National Government. Hogg clearly recognised the tension between Elliot's interest in corporatism and the government's need to disassociate itself from fascism. If we consider Hogg's corporatism in light of his understanding of electioneering, it is not difficult to explain why most 'progressive' Conservatives lacked the determination to translate their ideas into practice.

Hogg's arguments suggest that he accepted the basic principles behind universal suffrage. At the same time, he valued the role of the workers in the nation. But his main idea was to alter the constitution by replacing the House of Lords with a lower corporate chamber—the House of Commons would become the new upper chamber. Hogg wanted to address what he judged as serious discrepancies in British parliamentary democracy. Although he accepted universal suffrage, he rejected some of its consequences and its impact on the constitution. Firstly, he could not accept that electors had a greater influence on candidates than in the past; he thought this affected the strength of government and the long-term judgement of MPs. Secondly, he argued that the current system of choosing electoral candidates was no longer representative of the voting public, particularly of the working classes. A corporatist lower chamber would remove the negative consequences of democratic change without compromising parliamentary democracy. A technocratic chamber would be made up of representatives from industry and other professions, 'whether trade union or otherwise', and would enjoy some 'legislative self-expression'. The Commons would remain the chief legislative body to guard peoples' liberties. Technical advice would counteract the dominance of wealth in the Lords, and hence over the Conservative party. In this view, the appointment of technical representatives addressed concerns about a lack of working-class representation in Parliament, while MPs would be less susceptible to electoral pressures because policies would be debated by corporations.[53]

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[52] Quintin Hogg, 'The prospects of the Conservative party', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 115 (January 1934), pp. 36-7.
[53] Hogg, 'The prospects of the Conservative party', pp. 28-37.

Even if Hogg's proposals were likely to result in a de facto unicameral system, stripped of the checks of the current House of Lords, it would be wrong to brand them dictatorial or pro-fascist. Hogg saw the policy as a way of strengthening and speeding up democracy after rigorous discussion in both chambers. Some historians regard Conservative plans for a corporatist chamber in the 1930s as autocratic because minorities in industry would be forced to abide by the wishes of majorities, that workers would have to be coerced to comply, and that forming corporations is an arbitrary process.[54] But it is difficult to accept this view in Hogg's case. As he himself recognised, what made the Italian 'Corporate State' fascist was not the existence of rules, regulations, or the categorisation of industries, but its totalitarian control by the Italian Fascist party. Hogg was trying to construct a Conservative approach to the challenges posed by continental ideologies— reforming the current system of government whilst retaining its most important aspects: universal suffrage and parliamentary democracy. For Hogg, corporatism had to be appropriated for Conservative ends.

But if doubts remain about Hogg's motives for introducing more corporatism in Britain we must also recognise other aspects of his political thought, notably the influence of religion. Writing in 1933 he argued that a new idealism was already showing signs of emerging: 'Religion is probably more alive now amongst its adherents than in 1913.'[55] Likewise, in his broadcast for the BBC he proclaimed, 'I am prepared to stake the future of this country upon the truth of Christianity. You do not treat an animal in the same way as you treat an immortal soul.'[56] This comment was made in response to Marxism, but the fact that he envisaged religion governing the nation's conscience is important to understanding his political outlook. It reinforced his view—which the modern historian might choose to sympathise with or judge naive—that corporatism could be made to work so long as it was entrusted to the right sort of people, the British.

But corporatism's association with fascism could not be easily surmounted when it came to electioneering, as he demonstrated in his articles for the *Nineteenth Century and After*. Hogg wrote the first following a series of Conservative by-election defeats, particularly in East Fulham where Labour accused the National Government of war-mongering and of

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[54] For this view see William Frame, 'The Conservative party and domestic reconstruction 1931-35 (unpublished PhD thesis: Royal Holloway; University of London, 1999), pp. 379-80.
[55] Hogg, 'Young England, 1933', p. 423.
[56] Quintin Hogg, 'Whither Britain', *The Listener* (21 February 1934), p. 314.

being sympathetic towards fascism. He wrote the second after Mosley's controversial Olympia meeting.[57] In January 1934, Hogg analysed the Conservative victories of 1924 and 1931, comparing them with the party's defeats of 1923 and 1929. He concluded that 'fear is the trump card of the Conservatives'. He elaborated further: 'Before a Socialist victory is possible it will be necessary for the Labour Party to continue to control the appeal to the fear of Fascism and of war, which it has recently successfully employed.' Hogg was initially concerned that Labour would be able to stigmatise the Conservatives by implying they were closet-fascists. However, he quickly noted that Labour's strategy had been completely undermined by Stafford Cripps's own announcement of revolutionary policies in recent months: 'The cry of "No Fascismo" is rendered idle…Tories have done less to identify themselves with Fascism than have the Socialists with Bolshevism in recent years.'[58] This gave him confidence because he admitted that the Conservative party would contest the next election from a position of strength, due to fears of a socialist dictatorship, Labour's threat to protection, and the 'chaotic state of the world outside'. Hogg's interest in a 'forward policy' was based on his desire to sustain a Conservative government for a period of eight years. To some extent this explains why many Conservatives sacrificed their long-term goals for short-term electoral and careerist ambitions.

But Hogg was also troubled after Mosley's Olympia meeting in June 1934:

> Right-Wing Conservatism of the wrong kind has been alarmed by Fascist defection into dangerous activity, and Fascist criticism has (oddly enough) had the effect upon the uneducated public of making some of them believe that the true Conservative principles are really identical with Fascist principles, if only Conservative leaders did not compromise and hedge, as they are always supposed to do.[59]

He was worried that 'progressive' Conservatism would be undermined by a resurgent right-wing Conservatism in response to Mosley's BUF. Nevertheless, he advocated corporatism and continued to position himself amongst other 'progressive' Conservatives who he claimed did not fear being charged with socialism. He advocated a more equal society and argued that younger Conservatives respected 'the claim of the working class, and especially of the

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[57] John Ramsden, *A history of the Conservative party. The age of Balfour and Baldwin 1902-1940* (London, 1978), pp. 342-3.
[58] Hogg, 'The Prospects of the Conservative Party', pp. 31-2.
[59] Quintin Hogg, 'National or Conservative?', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 116 (July 1934), pp. 30-1.

skilled labourers, to security and comfort'.[60] Hogg appears to have felt that Conservatives should be targeting this section of the working class more than others. He also promised that a new National Government led by young Conservatives would multiply industrial planning schemes and fund social reform using 'Government credit'.[61] Clearly, Hogg was influenced by Keynes and probably Roosevelt's New Deal because he was interested in using public spending to stimulate demand in the economy and alleviate poverty. In this respect, Hogg proved himself to be more radical than Elliot. Nor was his support for Elliot's work at the Ministry of Agriculture absolute. He complained, 'its [the National Government's] social and economic programme, which might easily, if properly managed, attain the popularity that is often the reward of Tory democracy, is rapidly alienating even progressive Conservative opinion. Mr. Elliot, to give an outstanding example, is rapidly getting into very deep water'. But he also qualified his words, arguing, 'The farmers (which is most unjust) are too stupid to understand that they are likely to gain from the restrictions which are being imposed upon them, and do not appear to be in the least grateful for his activities.'[62] Hogg's candid comments again suggest that Conservatives viewed journals such as the *Nineteenth Century and After* as an essentially private literary space, which was unlikely to be exploited by political opponents. Comments like these would have done the party no good in rural areas where farmers were already sceptical about Elliot's marketing schemes.

Hogg's reluctant acknowledgement that the electoral strengths of the Conservative party and the National Government were bound by short-term thinking and decision-making helps explain why many backbench Conservatives resisted rebellion on issues of policy, but his comments also underline their fears about the long-term future of the party. Despite mistakes being made by 'progressive' Conservatives like Elliot while in government, Hogg argued 'It is quite unthinkable that the Tory Party should succeed in the next ten years in winning office without Mr. Oliver Stanley, Sir Donald Somervell, or Mr. Walter Elliot being amongst its leaders.'[63] Elliot's claim that his policy was likely to attract young Conservatives did not lack foundation.

It is difficult to judge how far Hogg's media profile and interest in 'progressive' Conservative intellectual debate influenced the party leadership and the local Conservative

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[60] Hogg, 'The Prospects of the Conservative Party', p. 34.
[61] Ibid., p. 35.
[62] Hogg, 'National or Conservative?', p. 33.
[63] Ibid., p. 34.

association in Oxford when he was adopted as a candidate in 1938, but the by-election was an important test of public opinion for Neville Chamberlain's foreign policy and the fact that the contest was entrusted to Hogg suggests that his efforts had probably enhanced his political reputation.[64] More important, however, was Hogg's own belief that his literary efforts were worthwhile, and his confidence that only 'radical' ideas would secure the party's future in an age of mass democracy. Most of Hogg's ideas were not quite as radical as he liked to make out, but his plans for the reform of the House of Lords and his willingness to use more state intervention as a means of financing social reform were forward-looking by pre-war Conservative standards. His suggestion that Christianity would help guard British politics and society against immoral practices reflected his confidence that the British could make corporatism safe and profitable for the modern age, but this was surely an old-fashioned Conservative response to the new challenges of the 1930s.

Conservatism and the Future

Lord Eustace Percy, W.S. Morrison, and Hugh Molson were also influential Conservative men of 'action' in the 1930s. All were prominent writers, but only Percy broadcast regularly for the BBC. All contributed important chapters to the backbench volume *Conservatism and the Future* in April 1935, which was intended to shore up the party's intellectual image and reputation for 'progressive' ideas in the run-up to the 1935 general election. As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, the book alarmed 'traditional' Conservatives because its 'progressive' message appeared to be endorsed by CCO.[65] It included chapters on social policy, the constitution, and the economy, by Percy, Molson, and Morrison respectively, while F.F.A. Heilgers supplied a warm appreciation of Elliot's agricultural policies, which

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[64] Although he was not yet an MP, it is interesting to note that Hogg's ideas were mobilised by prominent Conservative intellectuals. Hugh Sellon drew on Hogg's articles to legitimise his own corporatist arguments during 1934. See Hugh Sellon, *Dictatorship and Democracy* (London, 1934), p. 103. But also during the Oxford by-election campaign, Patrick Gordon Walker, who had been forced to withdraw from the contest as Labour's candidate, argued that A.D. Lindsay, the Independent Progressive (Popular Front) candidate, was failing to attract widespread support because he was relying mainly on middle-class votes, whereas Hogg appealed more to the working classes. See Robert Pearce (ed.), *Patrick Gordon Walker. Political diaries 1932-1971* (London, 1991), p. 91, entry for 20 October 1938. This is confirmed by national newspaper reports of the by-election. It was written that Hogg concentrated on the poorer districts of Oxford during the campaign. See *The Times*, 21October, 1938.

[65] Katherine Atholl to Arthur Bryant, 22 August 1935, Kings College London, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Arthur Bryant papers, C63/ Atholl.

no doubt played a role in his appointment as Elliot's Parliamentary Private Secretary later that year. The idea for the book came from its editor, E. Thomas Cook, who was keen to promote his own candidature as a National Conservative at the 1935 election.[66] Some of its contributors wrote their chapters in August 1934 and the book was likely conceived as a response to Labour's recent run of by-election victories, and, more importantly, to Mosley, who had attracted significant publicity in the preceding months.[67] Thomas Cook selected and invited the contributors and it is likely he chose the subjects of the chapters, but it was not planned as a joint manifesto or statement of policy. The following three sections discuss the literary work and ideas of Percy, Morrison, and Molson, partly because their ideas converged in *Conservatism and the Future*, but also because they were three of the most vocal exponents of 'progressive' Conservatism and 'action' in the 1930s.

Lord Eustace Percy: Conservative 'Man of Letters'

If Walter Elliot's membership of the cabinet was an astute political manoeuvre by Baldwin because it went some way to appeasing 'progressive' Conservatives, then the brief elevation of Lord Eustace Percy to the cabinet as Minister without Portfolio in 1935 probably had a similar affect. It strengthened the 'progressive' credentials of the National Government before the 1935 general election. However, it also deprived the more restless 'progressive' spirits of one of their 'big-hitters'.[68] Percy was the most experienced of the Conservative

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[66] See the forward to E. Thomas Cook (ed.), *Conservatism and the future* (London, 1935). Thomas Cook's strategy seemed to have worked, but then he was forced to withdraw his candidature in Southwark Central in favour of a National Labour candidate. The constituency had been dominated by the Liberal party and then the Labour party in recent years, which might explain the decision to adopt a National Labour candidate rather than a Conservative. The seat had been occupied by a Nationalist candidate, Ian Horobin, who had had the support of both the National Liberals and the Conservatives in 1931. Horobin's public defence of free-market economics is discussed in Chapter Seven.

[67] Hugh Molson to Arthur Steel-Maitland, 17 August 1934, Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, Arthur Steel-Maitland papers, GD193-255-147.

[68] Eustace Percy had been President of the Board of Education in Baldwin's second administration, 1924-29. He was appointed to the cabinet as Minister without Portfolio on 7 June 1935 and he resigned his position on 31 March 1936. The general election was held on 14 November 1935. Philip Williamson suggests that Percy's role as a member of the joint select committee on Indian constitutional reform and his defence of the National Government during debates on the future of India played the most important role in Baldwin's decision to appoint him to the cabinet. See Philip Williamson, 'Percy, Eustace Sutherland Campbell, Baron Percy of Newcastle (1887–1958)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35473, accessed 30 Sept 2009]. It is certainly true that this raised his profile considerably, but I would argue that Percy's reputation as a figurehead for the

men of 'action' and he was seen as an intellectual figurehead rather than a potential leader.[69] Percy valued literary Conservatism because he saw it as an important component in the political process: 'A healthy party, loyal to its leaders, must be constantly generating a volume of discussion about doctrines and policies, going far beyond its official programme.'[70] This thinking motivated his interest in writing about 'progressive' ideas during 1929-35, but he also hoped his efforts would secure his return to government. John Buchan drew attention to Percy's role as a public intellectual in 1935 when he referred to him in terms reminiscent of the Victorian era: 'Tonight we are fortunate in having as our chief guest one who is both statesman, scholar and man of letters…who, if he will forgive me for saying it, is that rare thing, a politician with behind him a genuine system of philosophy, one who has both the power to think and the desire to think, one who is a bracing antiseptic in a rather feverish world.'[71] This underlines the extent to which nineteenth century literary traditions continued into the 1930s. Percy's 'social philosophy' incorporated corporatist ideas for industrial reorganisation. Although some historians have referred to Percy's corporatism they have failed to recognise what motivated his interest in the Italian 'Corporate State'.[72] Percy wanted to combine educational reform, state intervention, and private enterprise to 'free' the individual, but he also wanted to re-establish the role of Christianity in British society. This thinking informed his response to the challenges of political extremism in his contributions to books, *The Spectator*, and radio.

'progressives' helped secure his appointment in the run-up to the 1935 election. Harold Macmillan lamented the fact that he was deprived of Percy's services in this period. See Harold Macmillan, *Winds of Change, 1914-39* (London, 1966), pp. 372-3. For Percy's view of the government of India in the 1930s see Lord Eustace Percy, 'The India report. II. A Conservative defence', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 117 (January 1935), pp. 14-23.

[69] Stuart Ball (ed.), *Parliament and politics in the age of Baldwin and MacDonald. The Headlam diaries 1923-1935* (London, 1992), p. 266, entry for 10 April 1933 where Headlam explains that Percy was 'disgruntled' with the government but unable to lead the young Conservative MPs successfully.

[70] Lord Eustace Percy, *Democracy on trial. A preface to an industrial policy* (London, 1931), p. 196.

[71] Speech by John Buchan at the National Book Trade Provident Society Dinner, 25 February 1935, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, John Buchan papers, 1st Baron Tweedsmuir, Acc-7214, Mf.SS.312.

[72] For a discussion of Percy's corporatism, see L.P. Carpenter, 'Corporatism in Britain, 1930-45', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 11 (1976), pp. 3-25.

Percy outlined his diagnosis of the economic crisis for the parliamentary select committee on procedure on public business in March 1931.[73] He wanted to make Parliament more business-like, which involved streamlining its procedure. The same principle lay behind his suggestion for an economic sub-parliament to consider economic matters in advance of Parliament.[74] At Ashridge, Percy informed Conservatives that the party believed in a market economy because it considered it to be the most efficient economic system for 'a healthy national society', but a healthy society could no longer be sustained by private enterprise alone. This meant that the state 'must have a call upon a proportion of the national product for the purpose of organising those social services which cannot, in their nature, be efficiently undertaken by any free association of individuals'. Percy argued that if industry could not provide the wage-earner with enough money to pay the lowest possible rent on a new house 'then any defence of the existing economic order must become frankly impossible'.[75] He criticised unemployment benefit because it was not just the 'condition of the people' but the 'spirit of the people' that made a successful society.[76] He supported the restructuring of industry as a means of stimulating employment, but he believed social services had to be developed to motivate the unemployed to find work.

These principles informed *Democracy On Trial* (1931), which gained notoriety because Percy summarised the book's arguments for the BBC series 'The Modern State'.[77] As a former cabinet minister, Percy was aware of the limited impact his literary work would have on policy-making, but he hoped to influence 'those better fitted to foreshadow the policies of the future'.[78] Broadcasting offered him an opportunity to amplify his ideas for political elites

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[73] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online, 1930-31 (161), Special Report from the Select Committee on procedure on public business with the proceedings, evidence, and index [accessed 23 January 2009], pp. 171-98.

[74] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online, 1930-31 (161), Special Report from the Select Committee on procedure on public business with the proceedings, evidence, and index [accessed 23 January 2009], pp. 138-53. Percy repeated these ideas later in the 1930s, see Lord Eustace Percy, 'Parliament as it should be', *The Spectator* (10 November 1933), pp. 653-4; and, *Government in transition* (London, 1934), pp. 90-124. Percy's views had much in common with Winston Churchill's own testimony to the committee, which pre-empted his famous Romanes Lecture in June 1930.

[75] Lord Eustace Percy, 'The politics of the morass and the policy of the mountain', *Ashridge Journal*, 1 (February 1930), p. 6.

[76] Ibid., p. 9.

[77] Percy's broadcasts aired for six consecutive weeks between 18 and 23 December 1931.

[78] Percy, *Democracy on trial*, p. 196. Percy had also been influential in setting-up the Conservative Research Department before Neville Chamberlain assumed control in the early 1930s, see John Ramsden, *The making of Conservative party policy. The Conservative Research Department since 1929* (London, 1980), pp. 33-4.

and a wider public. Percy argued democracy was not the answer to Britain's economic problems because the real question was unrelated: whether 'democracies or tyrants' could adapt their economic systems to provide enough incentives to prevent crowds from challenging the state.[79] Like Elliot, he criticised grass-roots party opinion: 'His [the politician's] initiative is discouraged rather by the dead-weight of the ordinary party views to which the party machine feels obliged to confine itself in its political propaganda in order not to shock any of its supporters.' The problem for Percy was not the political rights of the people—he praised the determination of the suffragettes—it was the way political parties overwhelmed political individualism to win votes.[80] This frank public confession underlines how some Conservatives viewed broadcasting as an extension of the elite literary world. He promoted parliamentary democracy because he thought it provided 'a constant thermometer of the moral temperature of society'. He identified this as an 'enormous advantage which any dictatorship would give much to possess'.[81]

But Percy was influenced by the Italian 'Corporate State'. He proposed 'associations of workmen' to advise the government on policy through a 'Council of Corporations' and he wanted the government's industrial policy to include 'a backbone of compulsory power'. Crucially, he relied on the purchase of Christian values amongst MPs to check a stronger British state, which meant governments should be trusted to act constitutionally and within the rule of law. No doubt appreciating the inherent dangers of dictatorship in this thinking, he was keen to warn fellow politicians that their strengths 'fall infinitely short of that power of the Spirit which speaks to men in very different language, in terms of regeneration, redemption and a new creation'.[82] His corporatism developed from his Christian desire to foster more equality in British society, but it was also a direct response to fascism.[83] He condemned the one party system, but he distinguished between the futility of conservative dictatorships and Mussolini's Fascist dictatorship, lauding the latter as a 'leveller'.[84] He stressed that Britain's 'leisured classes' would also have to be make sacrifices so that society could be more equal: 'All classes will increasingly have to rely on acquired skill as the only

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[79] Lord Eustace Percy, 'Practical results of political ideas', *The Listener* (25 November 1931), p. 893.
[80] Lord Eustace Percy, 'Political patching', *The Listener* (9 December 1931), p. 1002.
[81] Lord Eustace Percy, 'Reactions against democracy', *The Listener* (16 December 1931), p. 1043.
[82] Percy, *Democracy on trial*, pp. 190-5.
[83] Lord Eustace Percy, 'Where democracy fails', *The Spectator* (24 March 1933), p. 418. Although he thought Britain had reconciled executive independence with 'popular control', he blamed democracy for Parliament's inefficiency.
[84] He was referring to Miguel Primo de Rivera's Spain in the 1920s.

means of earning a living and, what is more important, the only means of securing an assured position in the community.'[85] Percy valued corporatism because he believed it could prevent a potential insurrection from below by improving national efficiency and by encouraging positive changes in society.

In October 1933 Percy outlined some of the ways he thought the National Government might respond to Mussolini's politics for the BBC. Percy discussed the 'Britishness' of the country's civil service, local government, and voluntary sector. He praised the mixed membership of local government committees, which included professional administrators paid for by the state through taxation, and amateur volunteers. Despite his vogue for corporatist thought he warned listeners, 'I think we shall have to be on our guard against treating these institutions as mere pieces of machinery. I have said they are peculiarly British, and by that I do not mean that they merely happened to be a British invention, like Watt's steam engine. I mean that they represent something in the British character. The three British institutions which we are considering grow naturally out of British habits of thought.'[86] Percy constructed an argument based on 'Britishness' to convince the public that corporatist solutions reflected British traditions of government, as well as a system of compromise between public officials and voluntary associations. He identified Elliot's agricultural schemes as the latest embodiment of these principles and, rather than arguing in favour of adopting the politics of the Fascist state, he explained to listeners that the Italians were now trying to achieve what the British had already achieved, albeit in a different way. He concluded, 'let us be careful that we do not lose that balance of which I have spoken; for in the scales of that balance lie two things, neither of which we can afford to lose—British administrative skill and British freedom'.[87]

However, responding to Stafford Cripps's arguments in November 1933, Percy's corporatist views were more explicit and his assessment of democracy more ambiguous: 'It is tempting to seek a remedy for this lack of initiative in the "corporative State," where a Member of Parliament would represent, not the helpless individual citizen, but the real corporate sources of social power, industrial and professional, and would therefore know how best to employ that power for social welfare'. Yet Percy appreciated that there were

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[85] Lord Eustace Percy, 'Cultivating our own home-garden', *The Listener* (23 December 1931), p. 1090.
[86] Lord Eustace Percy, 'Taking stock of our social machinery', *The Listener* (4 October 1933), p. 495.
[87] Ibid., p. 496.

major problems in adopting such a system: 'Unfortunately, you cannot construct the right kind of corporative State unless you first construct the right kind of corporation. The mere delegate of selfish corporate interests makes the worst conceivable Member of Parliament.' He also recognised that Parliament would have to regain its power of initiative before it could 'force industry to incorporate itself for public purposes by throwing upon it definite public responsibilities'.[88] All of these problems showed that Percy did not expect revolutionary change overnight, but he did expect the National Government to work in this direction. Percy failed to show how 'responsible' corporations might be produced. No doubt he would have argued that workers would have a say in the running of their industries and in the choosing of their representatives (MPs). However, his recognition of the difficulties facing the construction of a corporate state in Britain showed his conservatism. He wanted to re-establish a Christian society in which citizens were more responsible for the welfare of others, but he did not want a one party state or MPs representing vested interests. In essence, this was Percy's comprehensive Conservative response to socialism, his new Conservative 'philosophy', which was an attempt to rekindle traditional Tory values.

Percy's 1934 book *Government in Transition* developed these ideas more fully and was used by some Conservative sceptics as a means of combating socialism in the constituencies.[89] Like Elliot, here Percy argued that the National Government was already engaged in radical 'action': 'It has shown itself capable of strong and even revolutionary action in the establishment of a tariff system practically wholly independent of parliamentary control, and in the inauguration of still more dictatorial methods of organizing the production and sale of agricultural commodities.' But he also argued that the government's response to the unemployment problem was 'almost silent and almost motionless.'[90] This prompted his attempt to use industrial reorganisation to reform unemployment insurance, to lower wages, and adjust working hours to match economic productivity. Percy suggested you could separate ownership and capital from production by imposing new regulations on industry. He argued capitalist owners should be no more than sleeping-partners, which meant they would have less responsibility towards the unemployed (not having to pay industrial insurance

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[88] Percy, 'Parliament as it should be', p. 653.
[89] See Wilson, *Walks and talks*, pp. 85-9. Wilson wrote that he had tried to convince a socialist landlord of a local pub in his constituency about the potential for constructive Conservatism in the future by handing him a copy of Percy's book, even though he admitted that his own knowledge of 'progressive' Conservatism was 'immature' at best. Wilson's ideas are discussed in Chapter Seven.
[90] Percy, *Government in Transition*, pp. 8-9.

other than payments made through direct taxation). The management or producer would be free to organise industry in cooperation with workers and because both sides would recognise the difficulties facing their industries they would negotiate a reasonable compromise between wages and insurance on the one hand and levels of employment on the other; or so he hoped.[91]

More radical was his idea of the 'free gift'. Percy wanted to reduce taxation on industry and workers because it limited employment and resulted in the redistribution of money to the unemployed without creating anything in exchange. So he wanted to slowly change the principle behind relief. His system dictated that workers would give up some of their time to work for free, while capitalist shareholders would agree to maintain machinery and provide materials for the production of items that were ordered by unemployed organisations. Similar to the principles governing a 'property-owning democracy', Percy's 'Christian state' sought to renew important bonds between citizens of all classes in British society.[92] He reasoned that charitable gifts were a marked improvement on the *status quo* of 'combined State relief and private neglect'.[93] Goods would have to be produced instead of cash benefits for the unemployed, which would keep more people in work and create better conditions for the planning of industry.[94] Percy thought that the idea would reduce class tension and prevent the unemployed from challenging the state, but he failed to register shifts in nineteenth century attitudes towards charity, poverty and unemployment.[95] Although his motives were genuine, his conclusions showed a fundamental failure to grasp how war had transformed

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[91] Percy, *Government in Transition*, p. 175.

[92] We do not know if Percy had read Marcel Mauss's anthropological and sociological work, *The gift*. Mauss first published *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques* in the journal *L'Année Sociologique* in 1923-4, but it was not published in English until the 1950s. Therefore, it seems unlikely, but Percy did read French; he spent time in Paris while training for the Diplomatic Service and later as an assistant to Lord Robert Cecil at the Peace Conference in 1919. See Percy, *Some Memories*, p. 60. Percy helped draft The League of Nations Covenant. Mauss argued, 'A gift that does nothing to enhance solidarity is a contradiction'. Marcel Mauss, *The gift: the form and reason of exchange in archaic societies* (London, 2001 edn.), p. x.

[93] Percy, *Government in transition*, p. 170. Percy also referred to the 'free gift' as a sociological novelty, which might indicate that he was indeed aware of Mauss and other scholars associated with Emile Durkheim. As a prominent educationalist, it should not surprise us if he was. Ibid., p. 177.

[94] Ibid., p. 178.

[95] Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London. A study in the relationship between classes in Victorian society* (Harmondsworth, 1984), pp. 241-314, which uses Mauss's work to chart the deformation of the gift in late Victorian London.

ideas about social entitlement, especially for those 'heroes' who had not returned to a land fit to live in.[96]

Percy's ideas were not that progressive. He had little to say on creating new means of employment. He advocated small-scale public works, but these incorporated a system of 'subsistence wage rates', which provided a 'bare livelihood…but substantially more than the present scales of unemployment benefit'. He explained, 'It is in an atmosphere of economy, not in an atmosphere of inflation, that a non-economic public works policy must be carried out.'[97] This signaled his limited sympathy for Keynesian or expansionist economics. He also dismissed 'inflated dreams of new currency systems which are offered to us as an alternative'.[98] The best he could offer was a back to the land policy and a system of apprenticeships, which would be organised by industry to help educate children for future work.[99] He promoted these ideas in *Conservatism and the Future*.[100] Conservative social policy, he wrote, 'is an attitude of radical opportunism in the choice of expedients, but it is an attitude also of steady adherence to certain old purposes those expedients are to serve'.[101] This was the reverse of interwar fascist ideology, which drew on nationalist myths of the past to serve a new (or 'modern') political identity.

Percy's Christian Conservatism refined his corporatism, which provided him with a useful critique of fascism:

> To Toryism, indeed, more than to any other school of political thought, "totalitarianism" is, in principle, fundamentally repugnant. Dualism is of the essence of its creed, a dualism enshrined in the old phrase "Church and State." It finds the motive force of human progress, not in the compulsory authority of the State, but in the individual's conscience and sense of duty.

Although he sympathised with Mussolini's regime because of its accommodation with the Catholic Church, he criticised British fascism for its materialism and its willingness to destroy freedom of thought, liberty, and 'spiritual power' in its effort to raise living

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[96] See Susan Pederson, 'Gender, welfare, and citizenship in Britain during the Great War', *American Historical Review*, 95 (October 1990), pp. 983-1006. Also, W.G. Runciman, *A treatise on social theory. Volume III: applied social theory* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 51-4.
[97] Percy, *Government in Transition*, pp. 180-2.
[98] Ibid., p. 169.
[99] Ibid., pp. 183-7.
[100] Lord Eustace Percy, 'The Conservative attitude and Conservative social policy', in E. Thomas Cook (ed.), *Conservatism and the future* (London, 1935), pp. 32-5.
[101] Ibid., p. 18.

standards.[102] Percy's literary efforts enhanced his political career, but this was also because his ideas were formulated to inspire traditional Conservative and religious values. He doubted the applicability of his own ideas at times, but he contributed to the National Government's ability to hold on to some of the Conservative party's restless spirits. Like Elliot and Hogg, Percy supplied the party and government with important intellectual ammunition, which was used to rival Mosley's politics of 'action' and Labour's statist alternative to solving unemployment.

W.S. Morrison's 'Merry England'

W.S. Morrison had much in common with Percy, but like Elliot he was seen by some members of the party as a future Conservative leader.[103] The editor of *The Countryman*, J.W. Robertson Scott, recalled an important conversation with Baldwin shortly after his retirement as Prime Minister in which Morrison was singled out for praise: 'He spoke very highly and repeatedly of Morrison. Elliot was a man of great ability, but Morrison was more remarkable, certainly to his mind a future Prime Minister. He said this twice. He was a great friend and he thought very highly of him. He was glad he had been able to get him into the Cabinet before handing over.'[104] Austin Hopkinson, an Independent MP, but also a fierce supporter of Baldwin and the National Government, regarded Morrison as Baldwin's natural heir: 'The prophet's mantle ought to go to Shakes—perhaps after a short inter regnum under Neville. The one thing for which the party have absolutely no use is the "grand old Conservative Party" and Disraeli and Joe Chamberlain and all that tripe.'[105] Morrison was a rising star in the National Government because he was a Baldwinite Conservative, but he

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[102] Percy, 'The Conservative attitude', pp. 21-2. For Percy's views on the Fascist regime, see Percy, 'Reactions against democracy', p. 1043.

[103] Ball (ed.), *Parliament and politics in the age of Baldwin and MacDonald* (London, 1992), pp. 304-5, see entry for 7 June 1934 where Headlam noted that Morrison was 'extremely popular with all and sundry. He is decidedly clever and speaks well. His only handicap for political success and advancement is poverty—he could not afford to take a job in the Government and give up his practice at the Bar'.

[104] Philip Williamson and Edward Baldwin (eds), *Baldwin Papers: a Conservative statesman 1908-1947* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 448. Robertson Scott's memorandum is dated 28 January 1938.

[105] Austin Hopkinson to A.D. Cochrane, 20 October 1936, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, A.D. Cochrane papers, Acc-10218/8/12. Morrison was often referred to as 'Shakes', meaning 'Shakespeare'. For evidence of Hopkinson's support for Baldwin, see Austin Hopkinson, 'The importance of Stanley Baldwin', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 108 (December 1930), pp. 681-9; and, 'Mr. Baldwin's responsibility', *Fortnightly Review*, 137 (April 1935), pp. 399-407.

was regarded as a political asset partly because of his ideas, his literary work, and his oratory. He had already broadcast for the party on the history of Parliament in 1932 and his arguments mirrored the sentiment of Baldwin's broadcasts. Morrison stressed constitutionalism and national values on radio to reinforce his Tory arguments about the importance of an 'organic' society. With these credentials, Morrison succeeded Elliot as Minister of Agriculture in 1936.[106]

While Morrison shared some of Elliot's and Percy's ideas, he was keen to distinguish himself from other backbenchers through his literary endeavours.[107]. In 1933 the fascist-leaning *English Review* published an address to their Luncheon Club in which Morrison outlined his core political philosophy. Morrison argued that the overwhelming need of the individual to belong to a community, or to be useful to others, was no longer considered essential in Britain's economic system, which undermined a successful society: 'Pigeon clubs, Freemasons, Buffaloes, Oddfellows (with the emphasis on "odd"—in other words not whelmed in the mass) are all manifestations of a thwarted humanity seeking comfort. But all this is achieved in leisure. It would be better if it could be achieved in work.' Quoting Sir Henry Maine's idea on man's 'advance from status to contract', Morrison informed Conservatives that their creed would be strengthened if they concentrated on providing the means for giving workers more status rather than subsidised wealth.[108] This theme, that society and 'community' mattered more than the aggregate of the nation's economic wealth, dominated Morrison's literary contributions throughout this period.

Morrison argued that Conservatives should return to the 'organic' basis of their creed. Status, he claimed, was already in place in the countryside, but following the industrial

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[106] See W.S. Morrison, 'The growth of parliament', *The Listener* (24 August 1932), p. 268. Morrison's broadcast was actually part of a series, which included Elliot's broadcast on 'The Parliamentary Machine at Work'. Both broadcasts were clearly intended to strengthen the public's confidence in parliamentary democracy in the face of mounting criticism since 1930. As Minister of Agriculture Morrison continued to broadcast regularly in the same vain as Elliot. For example, see W.S. Morrison, 'Grassland improvement', *The Listener* (6 October 1937), p. 731; 'Agriculture in our national life', *The Listener* (20 October 1938), p. 811; 'Stocking the nation's larder', *The Listener* (5 October 1939), p. 665.

[107] Morrison's interest in 'progressive' Conservative policies (particularly the rationalisation of industry) was already evident in January 1930. He wrote to the Conservative MP A.D. Cochrane to explain that he had 'took the subject out for an airing' in a recent article for the *Saturday Review*. He mentioned in his letter that he had also submitted proposals on the subject to Eustace Percy. See W.S. Morrison to A.D. Cochrane, 17 January 1930, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, A.D. Cochrane papers, Acc.10218 Box 22/3.

[108] W.S. Morrison, 'Industrial society and Conservative principles', *English Review*, 56 (June 1933), p. 645. The original address was delivered on 22 March.

revolution 'The politics of the towns…degenerated into economics'.[109] The error was valuing wealth over employment, which was the result of nineteenth century Liberalism and *laissez-faire*. Morrison wanted to revive the 'intelligent interference' of the state in British economic policy, which he recognised in late eighteenth century England.[110] He also recognised the value of a hierarchical society, assuming it was one that was based on reciprocal relationships of mutual respect:

> Parliaments and politicians come and go, but human society holds obstinately together in the tough framework of certain relationships. Ruler and subject, leader and led, master and man, parents and children, the whole instigated and controlled by ethical ideas forged from unimaginable experiments; these relationships, popular in the widest sense, are what we have to work with and nothing but reaction in the true sense can come from an economy which disregards them.[111]

Like many 'progressive' Conservatives, Morrison placed the family and property-ownership at the heart of society. He also confirmed his admiration for Baldwin when he urged Conservatives to accept 'religion as the expression of the true nature of man, the everlasting challenge to all forces which would deny to humanity a significance other than merely economic'.[112] Religion was identified as the key unifying force in British society, conveying a sense of individual worth on members of the national community.

Morrison's chapter on economics in *Conservatism and the Future* clarified his preference for a hierarchical, cooperative order. He wanted politicians to 'revive the native social mood of the people which at bottom assumes a community of interests in all sections and grades'. While he added, 'Much that appears difficult to-day will prove easier of solution when the burden of leadership is recognised as an inevitable consequence of the possession of wealth and when the anarchic social code of the century of scramble has given place to the older conception of a man's duty to his neighbour.'[113] Morrison criticised Liberals for continuing to support 'economic anarchy' (free trade) while, at the same time, arguing for social reform, which required state subsidies, therefore weakening individual character. Morrison proposed to leave 'the powers of private property and free individual enterprise, inside an ordered realm, as the prime movers of economic progress'. For this

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[109] Morrison, 'Industrial society', p. 641.
[110] W.S. Morrison, 'Economics', in Thomas Cook (ed.), *Conservatism and the future*, p. 65.
[111] Ibid., pp. 67-8.
[112] Morrison, 'Industrial Society', pp. 645-6.
[113] Morrison, 'Economics', p. 86.

reason, he recommended the adoption of corporatist thinking because he believed it would help preserve Britain's political institutions by increasing economic efficiency.[114]

Morrison, like Elliot, believed in safeguarding British agriculture and industry, while moving forward with a programme of systematic reorganisation.[115] He wrote about the need to convince investors to sink their capital into domestic agriculture as opposed to foreign markets, which he argued were more risky and unstable.[116] He supported tariffs and quotas because he believed they protected the heads of households, giving them status by keeping them in work, which he sensed was more important than increasing the national wealth without adequate means of distribution. But Morrison believed only the regulation of wages could ensure economic prosperity because the re-distribution of money by the state affected 'national character'. He agreed with Percy that wages had to be flexible to correspond with market competition and he echoed Percy's concerns about taxation on industry being counterproductive to employment.[117] It was this belief that led him to corporatism rather than Keynes. Morrison was not sympathetic to economic expansionism and public works. He also looked unfavourably on Roosevelt's New Deal because his main concern was to reduce the burden of national debt and taxation. Increased public borrowing for stimulating the economy would penalise future generations 'to give one generation a slightly easier time'.[118] Morrison understood the potential threat of corporatism to the small producer, but he was willing to gamble for the sake of cutting unemployment and retaining Britain's parliamentary system. He argued British politicians could be trusted to defend the interests of the people, but clearly he was apprehensive. Like Elliot, he rejected calls for the imposition of a corporate state because he argued critics neglected 'the extent to which we already possess corporate organs'. He argued these organs could be evolved 'naturally' to accommodate the 'duties' of wage regulation.[119]

Morrison was a useful 'progressive' ally of the National Government because he mixed with Conservatives and other right-wing figures at the *English Review* Luncheon Club who were interested in fascism and who wanted to adopt the Italian 'Corporate State'. His article for the *English Review* was timed to restore confidence in Conservatism and a free society in

[114] Morrison, 'Economics', pp. 69-71.
[115] Ibid, pp. 52-4.
[116] Ibid., p. 59.
[117] Ibid., p. 77.
[118] Ibid., pp. 87-9.
[119] Ibid., p. 81.

which individualism could flourish. Morrison's compromise with corporatism seemed to reflect what he recognised as the 'spirit of Toryism', which conflicted with the statist politics of socialism. But a preference for a hierarchical society, 'organic' relationships between individuals of different classes, voluntary service, religious values, and upper-class paternalism were all central to Morrison's Conservatism. These were traditional Tory values that Morrison claimed could be reconciled with corporatism but not fascism. By appropriating 'languages of corporatism' without jeopardising these values, Conservative men of 'action' provided an alternative 'modern' politics on the right, which they and others believed could be implemented by the National Government. This boosted Baldwin's ability to nullify the extremist threat from Mosley by preventing more radical, anti-parliamentary ideas from gaining ground inside the Conservative party.

Hugh Molson's 'Pharmacopoeia'

Hugh Molson also pledged his unreserved support to Baldwin and the National Government in periodicals, books, and on radio, and he recognised the importance of marketing the National Government as a force for 'action'. Molson was MP for Doncaster (1931-35), a distressed area that was in need of economic reconstruction to address high levels of unemployment. His interest in corporatism was not purely strategic, but his commitment to 'progressive' Conservatism was far from resolute. There was a notable tension between Molson's support for the ideas of his friend Harold Macmillan—he signed *Planning for Employment* and *The Next Five Years* (and helped draft the latter, which included an enabling bill for industry)—and his more nuanced approach to 'progressive' ideas in publications for elite readerships.[120] This was mainly because he accepted the government's response to the economic crisis, which relied on a recovery in world trade to solve Britain's economic difficulties. Under these circumstances 'action' was used as a stop-gap policy to alleviate the worst aspects of poverty because he did not wish to permanently disturb the most important aspects of Britain's market economy.

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[120] See *Planning for Employment*, pp. vii-ix. On the degree to which Macmillan, Molson, and Percy cooperated during this period and how they occasionally waged a collective campaign in favour of industrial reorganisation in the country, see Macmillan, *Winds of change*, pp. 372-4, and for summaries and signatories of both publications, pp. 622-36.

Unlike other 'progressives,' Molson was given little opportunity to shine on radio.[121] He complained about the difficulties this posed for backbench Conservatives: 'The development of broadcasting has immensely increased the influence of the half-dozen party spokesmen who address the nation at election time, and has correspondingly diminished the personal influence of candidates.'[122] Molson understood that broadcasting was highly influential, but periodicals and books provided him with a means of making a name for himself in and around Westminster. Molson was not always as sensitive towards working-class voters as other 'progressives' and this was probably why he was not as highly valued by CCO. Furthermore, his association with Macmillan was unlikely to breed favouritism.[123] The tensions between Molson's electoral strategies, his support for the National Government, and his interest in 'progressive' ideas (due to his experiences in Doncaster) were central to his Conservatism, but his intellectual engagement with the Italian Fascist regime increased his commitment to universal suffrage and parliamentary government in the 1930s.

In her recent biography of Evelyn Waugh, Paula Byrne highlights Waugh's friendship with Molson during their school days. Intersecting Waugh's words with her own, she states Molson was 'Flamboyant, highly intelligent and sophisticated, he dazzled with his "superb pomposity of manner and vocabulary". Molson had, Evelyn noted in his diary, "the true aristocrat's capacity of being perfectly at home in anyone's company." He was perhaps the first of the Sebastian type.'[124] As hardly any archival material relating to Molson survives, this gives us some indication of his social background. One might suggest that he was not the most natural candidate to fight Doncaster (one doubts that Waugh was thinking of Molson's ability to converse with organised industrial workers), but the same might be said of any Conservative trying to secure an industrial seat in this period. Waugh's comments do explain the background to Molson's use of language. For example, in 1930 Molson wrote for a

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[121] Molson was restricted to appearances on the BBC's regional service.
[122] Hugh Molson, 'The future of the constitution', in Thomas Cook (ed.), *Conservatism and the future*, p. 231.
[123] Percy's association with Macmillan was probably overlooked because he was favoured by Baldwin and he had played a prominent role in the 1924-29 Conservative government. Many years passed before Molson was rewarded for his sympathies during the 1930s. He was made Minister of Works by Macmillan in 1957, but he was also Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Works in 1951-53 and Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation between November 1953 and January 1957. Molson was re-elected for the High Peak Division of Derbyshire in 1939 after losing the 1935 election; he retained his seat until he was made a Life Peer in 1961.
[124] Paula Byrne, *Mad world. Evelyn Waugh and the secrets of Brideshead* (London, 2009), p. 29. Lord Sebastian Flyte was the central character in Waugh's book *Brideshead revisited. The sacred and profane memories of Captain Charles Ryder* (London, 1945).

conservative readership: 'There is not the same antipathy between Socialists and Tories [as there is between Tories and Radicals], but Tories cannot associate themselves in any way with a party which relies so largely upon the support of the feckless, the improvident, the loafer and the half-witted.' Molson admitted Conservatives were guilty of representing the 'possessing classes', but he argued this was not comparable with Labour's reliance on 'the lowest section of the community'.[125] Had he addressed the constituents of Doncaster in this way, it is hard to imagine voters sympathising with his views, but 'educated' readers were safer territory. Molson also argued that the record of the three political parties troubled 'the younger school of Unionists who find themselves so much in agreement with many of their opponents, and so much out of sympathy with the older school in their own party'.[126] Molson was a 'progressive' Conservative who mixed with MPs from all political parties, but we should not assume that he was not elitist. His fondness for the 'other side' owed as much to his Lancing and Oxford days as it did to his sympathy for the unemployed.[127]

Why was Molson a Conservative? His father had been a Unionist MP, but he also valued the Conservative party because it was not bound by doctrinaire theories.[128] He wrote that it 'has never allowed itself to become irrevocably committed to any political nostrum; it has never seen the fulfilment of a Divine purpose in unrestricted individualism nor in unqualified Socialism. It is therefore in the happy position of not having to recant, but with enlightened opportunism adapts its policy to circumstances instead of trying to adapt circumstances *a priori* to theory'.[129] Molson's interest in pragmatic Conservatism ensured that his politics were moderate, which is why he was an ally of Baldwin and the National Government. Molson argued that because most new Conservative MPs benefitted from Liberal and National Labour support in 1931, they would accept any policy the government chose to adopt. Their loyalty to Baldwin was enhanced by the fact that he sacrificed being Prime

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[125] Hugh Molson, 'Unionist party policy', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 107 (March 1930), p. 324.
[126] Ibid., p. 323.
[127] Like Waugh, he had been close to Tom Driberg (a future Chairman of the Labour party) in the early 1920s, while he mixed with Liberals like Robert Bernays in the 1930s. See Byrne, *Mad world*, p. 29. Nick Smart (ed.), *The diaries and letters of Robert Bernays, 1932-1939. An insider's account of the House of Commons* (Lampeter, 1996), pp. 71-2.
[128] John Elsdale Molson, Unionist MP for Gainsborough, 1918-23. He was also a member of the Carlton Club. Significantly, Hugh Molson chose 'Unionist' rather than Conservative in his article for the *Nineteenth Century and After*.
[129] Molson, 'Unionist party policy', p. 324.

Minister for the good of the country.[130] Baldwin's handling of the 'diehards' at the Conservative party conference in 1934 reinforced Molson's admiration:

> No statesman has the same capacity for discovering under current political events the continuity of national development, and no orator has the same power of expressing his political philosophy in a noble English, yet one understanded [sic] of the people. While making no direct reference to the divergences of opinion which the Conference showed were existing within the party, he gave the clearest expression of the Tory outlook that the party has had for a generation and an uncompromising indication of his own resolve not to accept dictation from the rank and file.[131]

Baldwin and the National Government reflected Molson's Unionism, feeding his ambition to develop the National coalition as a permanent political force.

Four years of National Government confirmed his impression that 'the parties are not now of the same political family…and that more frequent changes of administration may be preferable to violent changes of policy every five years'. In *Conservatism and the Future* he advocated proportional representation and the single transferable vote to boost the forces of parliamentary moderation.[132] He rejected the idea that democracy could be reversed: 'Whatever reasons may be advanced for reforming the House of Lords, the most unsound is that it can be used to nullify the effects of the franchise which Disraeli, Bonar Law and Mr. Baldwin all extended. After all, screwing down a safety valve does nothing to reduce the steam pressure.'[133] Molson's reformed political system would secure the centre ground by isolating MPs to the left and right of the National Government. Molson was even willing to act undemocratically against Conservative 'diehards'. Robert Bernays wrote that Molson

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[130] Hugh Molson, 'The domestic task before the National Government', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 111 (February 1932), pp. 152, 160. During the controversy of the Government of India bill, Molson was also an optimist in this period, choosing to stress how surprising it was that most Conservatives accepted the case for reform; the minority opposition to the government did not phase him because he believed the controversy demonstrated how far the party had come to progress and he was confident the party would choose solidarity and loyalty over division. See Hugh Molson, 'India and the Conservative Party', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 114 (August 1933), pp. 132-9. Amery also noted in his diary that it was Molson who was jointly responsible for turning the 1932 Conservative party conference in the government's favour thanks to a blazing speech on India against the 'diehards' and much of the party's rank and file. See John Barnes and David Nicholson (eds), *The empire at bay: the Leo Amery diaries 1929-1945*. (London, 1988), p. 283.

[131] Molson, 'Parties in conference 1. Conservatives at Bristol', p. 476.

[132] Molson, 'The future of the constitution', pp. 235-6.

[133] Ibid., p. 237.

wanted to scrap the Conservative party conference in 1933 to protect the party leadership on India.[134]

Molson's concern for Conservative electoral strategy played an important role in his politics and this changed significantly after the 1931 election. In 1930 he agreed with Baldwin that the party should not adopt 'a policy' because the Conservatives could win the election on a 'sound but unspectacular programme'. For Molson, the party's defeat in 1929 was tactical: 'The error of making "safety first" a slogan at the last election was that John Bull felt it to be a breach of confidence for the Unionist Party to publish to the world for the first time a private and a confidential understanding.' But Molson judged that a 'progressive' programme would be needed once the party was in office. This meant the reorganisation of industry and marketing schemes for agriculture. These were offered as part of the 'statesman's pharmacopoeia' because the people expected 'legislative fireworks'.[135] Two years later, Molson worked to increase conservative support for these ideas: 'There is fairly general acceptance of the thesis of Mr. G.D.H. Cole, the *Week-End Review*, Sir Oswald Mosley, and Lord Eustace Percy that we must now enter on a period of deliberate "planning," and that the plan will include principles of individualism and of Socialism quite impartially and with no object other than efficiency.'[136] Molson wanted to show that the National Government was capable of 'action' and that revolution was not needed to stimulate employment. By extending the Agricultural Marketing Act, Molson argued that 'the National Government can show itself more progressive, more truly radical, than its Socialist predecessor'.[137]

Molson's ideas for the reorganisation of industry and the stabilisation of the economy were conservative. They mirrored Percy's suggestions, but without the same Christian gloss. Molson focussed on cutting unemployment benefit, which he believed would incentivise the population to work. He suggested workers would be in a better position to take advantage of a trade revival after reorganisation because the unemployed labour force would be more fluid (i.e. residents of distressed areas would be forced to move to find work in more productive industries).[138] This was not very progressive and his motives for 'planning' the economy

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[134] Smart (ed.), *The diaries and letters of Robert Bernays*, pp. 71-2, diary entry for 27 April 1933.
[135] Molson, 'Unionist party policy', p. 330.
[136] Molson, 'The Domestic Task before the National Government', pp. 152-3.
[137] Ibid., p. 160.
[138] Ibid., p. 153-5.

were hardly Keynesian; they seemed to pre-figure Margaret Thatcher's hard-line attitude towards modernising the British economy in the 1980s. Molson's attitude towards tariffs reflected this sentiment, 'A tariff is only economically justified as an instrument for reducing British costs; it is not justified if it merely obscures the fact that British costs are higher than foreign.'[139] Molson focussed on cutting out the dead wood of British industry to retain its competiveness.

Molson's conservatism was evident before the 1935 election. He wrote, 'nothing will *immediately* cure unemployment, and that steps even in the right direction *must* be slow'.[140] He praised Lloyd George's 'New Deal' as 'a useful stir in the world of politics', but he criticised the former Prime Minister for assuming 'heroic measures' would solve unemployment. Molson argued only time and a revival of world trade would increase employment, not large-scale public works. Molson was more complimentary about Macmillan's Next Five Years Group (of which he was a member) because they did not 'adopt an attitude of great optimism about unemployment'. He favoured small scale public works and tax relief for industry in distressed areas, but these were special cases in need of immediate help.[141] Otherwise Molson's thinking was orthodox: 'A policy of complete *laissez faire* would no doubt bring about the necessary adjustments in the long run, but slowly, wastefully and with much suffering. The wise policy would seem to be one that hastens, guides and tempers these natural adjustments.'[142] Molson was not looking for a policy of full employment; he accepted that men over the age of 40 might never work again.[143] In an election year he was also keen to play down 'progressive' criticisms of the government.[144]

Molson's reaction to the World Economic Conference in 1933 is equally revealing. President Roosevelt refused to stabilise international currencies by propping up gold as the world's monetary benchmark. Roosevelt ordered the US government to come off the Gold Standard. He then bought up large quantities of gold, which resulted in the devaluation of the US Dollar. He did this because he hoped it would result in a rise in commodity (mainly

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[139] Molson, 'The Domestic Task before the National Government', p. 157.
[140] Hugh Molson, 'Unemployment and the distressed areas', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 138 (October 1935), p. 446.
[141] Ibid., pp. 445-6.
[142] Ibid., p. 450.
[143] Ibid., p. 443.
[144] See Molson's letter to *The Times*, 4 July 1935. He defended the National Government's record and he insisted that 'progressive' policies would be embraced if they were deemed economically viable.

agricultural) prices in America.[145] Molson disliked monetary solutions to solving unemployment. He wrote to Arthur Steel-Maitland, who was then writing a book on Roosevelt's New Deal:

> I am very sorry to see that Roosevelt seems still to believe that good can come of juggling with currency & audit. Do you still think that Rosie is going to swing Right? I hate his preoccupation with silver which seems to be an American political fetish which has survived as all meaning superstition from Bryan's time. However, I shall hope to see your latest views on the new developments in your book.[146]

Molson probably wanted Roosevelt to 'swing to the Right' because it would have created the conditions for stabilising currency exchange, which could then serve as a foundation for industrial planning schemes. In the 1930s Molson valued economic stability above 'progressive' Conservatism or 'legislative fireworks'.

This explains why Molson never endorsed the Italian 'Corporate State' for Britain. Molson conducted two intellectual investigations in 1933-34. The first tackled industrial relations in Fascist Italy and the second responded to Mussolini's criticisms of British parliamentary democracy. Molson was aware of the Fascist regime's use of state power to control industry and its workforce, but he was keen on the regime's ability to adjust wage levels in different industries.[147] He also sympathised with the Fascist regime because he viewed the British government's criticisms of the 'Corporate State' as hypocritical. Elliot's marketing schemes were central here:

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[145] See Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The age of Roosevelt vol. 2. The coming of the new deal, 1933-35* (London, 1959), pp. 195-252. The Roosevelt administration had also returned to bimetallism, which had the effect of subsidising a relatively minor industry at great cost without producing any real advantage for the American economy. It also inflicted damage on the Chinese and Mexican economies in the process. Macmillan, *Winds of change*, pp. 287-9.

[146] Hugh Molson to Arthur Steel-Maitland, 17 August 1934, Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, Arthur Steel-Maitland papers, GD193-255-147. William Jennings Bryan was a former American presidential nominee who campaigned for the 'working man's silver' at the expense of the 'rich man's gold' in the 1890s. The book that Molson was eagerly awaiting was Arthur Steel-Maitland, *The new America* (New York, 1935). I have chosen not to write about Steel-Maitland, partly because Ewen Green has already covered his ideas admirably, but also because he was not so prolific in the periodical press or on radio during this period. *The New America* stands out as his only major contribution because he died in 1935. However, it is clear from this correspondence that young Conservative MPs like Molson viewed him as one of the party's treasured intellectuals. See E.H.H. Green, 'An intellectual in Conservative politics: the case of Arthur Steel-Maitland', in E.H.H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism*, pp. 72-113. When he did write for the periodical press it was usually on the economy; for example, see Arthur Steel-Maitland, 'Economy-false and true', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 111 (April 1932), pp. 385-41.

[147] Hugh Molson, 'Industry and capital and labour in the Fascist state', *English Review*, 57 (November 1933), pp. 459-64.

> Every country, and Britain most of all, restricts by Government action freedom of contract between capital and labour; it interferes with the relations of industry and imposes marketing schemes, fixes prices and restricts or encourages output. Governments act on the assumption that they cannot afford to let a great industry collapse, and all the time they loudly disclaim any desire to intervene and refuse to provide themselves with adequate machinery for doing so. Italy has accepted the logic of the position and has provided machinery for the close co-ordination and regulation of her economic activities.[148]

This shows that he was willing to work towards the implementation of a corporatist system for British industry. When he reported on a resolution tabled by Ker Lindsey and Macmillan at the Conservative party conference in Bristol in 1934 on self-government for industry, he wrote, 'This resolution was of special interest as showing how far the Left Wing of the Tory Party has moved from the orthodoxy of ten years ago. If carried to its logical conclusion, it implies acceptance of the principle of the Corporate State.'[149] But Molson also reported John Colville's response on behalf of the government. Colville outlined a more cautious approach, which promised to look at each industry on its own terms. Despite his interest in corporatism, Molson did not commit himself to either policy in the periodical press, whereas Macmillan never wasted an opportunity to promote his objectives.

In *Conservatism and the Future* Molson described Mussolini as the 'most notable critic in word and the most powerful enemy in deed of Parliamentary Government'. Mussolini criticised the British system of selecting parliamentary candidates, the democratic and geographic franchise, party politics, and the way 'amateurs' prevented the passing of legislation produced by 'experts'. Molson agreed with Mussolini about candidate selection, but he rejected the Italian leader's authoritarianism because he believed in the restraining influence of Parliament. Backbenchers, he argued, 'unlike the Government, will not always be prepared to put administrative convenience before the rights of the individual citizen'. Similarly, he rejected claims that party politics dominated the work of Parliament, citing evidence of bills that were rejected by MPs on the floor of the House.[150] Molson confidently disposed, 'So far it has appeared that theory does nothing and practice little to justify the application to Britain of Signor Mussolini's condemnation of the Parliamentary system.'[151] In a summary of the Conservative party conference for the BBC in 1935, he also expressed

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[148] Molson, 'Industry and capital and labour in the Fascist state', pp. 467-8.
[149] Molson, 'Parties in Conference', p. 475.
[150] Molson, 'The Future of the Constitution', pp. 202-4.
[151] Ibid., pp. 207-8.

his commitment to anti-totalitarianism.[152] However, Mussolini's claim that Parliament was less able 'to deal with complicated and technical matters' compared with the Italian 'Corporate State' continued to trouble him.[153] But Molson was never convinced of the applicability of the Italian 'Corporate State' to Britain, which is why he was content with the National Government's evolutionary approach to granting self-government for agriculture and then (he hoped) industry.

Molson argued more legislative power should reside with parliamentary committees rather than with ministers or the courts because he thought they represented a compromise between effective administration and the defence of civil liberties.[154] He referred to the Tariff Advisory Committee as a model: 'Precision is obtained by expert enquiry and speed is obtained by administrative order, but Parliament still retains the power to take a broad view of the rights and interests of the nation.'[155] Elliot's Agricultural Marketing Act was applied in the same way: 'Here we have a very clear case of self-government being given to an industry, including the power to raise prices, but Parliament retains control because the Minister is responsible to it and because his Orders have to be submitted for its approval.'[156] But Molson was critical of agricultural marketing schemes because he felt not enough protection was given to the consumer—'Parliament has abolished even the theory that the consumer can bargain.' His views on planning were far from socialist.[157] He agreed with Winston Churchill's idea for an 'Economic Sub-Parliament', but it would not replace the Commons or the Lords. Its powers would be advisory in relation to Parliament and supervisory in the case of industry. Molson preferred industry to organise itself without too much government interference and he approved of the recent collective wage agreement negotiated independently by employers and workers in the cotton industry. Molson was also interested in a smaller cabinet modelled on the War Cabinet from the First World War because he wanted a more centralised system of power.[158]

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[152] Hugh Molson, 'Summary of the Conservative Conference', Broadcast on the BBC Regional Programme, 5 October 1935, Caversham, BBC Written Archives Centre, microfilm, T[alks] 344. In his broadcast, Molson highlighted the 'progressive' ideas discussed at the conference, including measures to tackle unemployment in the distressed areas like the extension of old-age pensions and Walter Elliot's agricultural reforms.
[153] Molson, 'The Future of the Constitution', pp. 207-8.
[154] Ibid., pp. 210-2.
[155] Ibid., p. 215.
[156] Ibid., p. 216.
[157] Ibid., pp. 216-9.
[158] Ibid., pp. 200-23.

Interestingly before *Conservatism and the Future* was published Molson sought the opinion of Arthur Steel-Maitland who had been a minister during the First World War. Molson knew little of constitutional matters and pleaded with Steel-Maitland for advice: 'I am making very heavy weather of my chapter on the Constitution which I have to contribute to our back-benches' volume on current political problems. I wonder whether I should be presuming too much on your good nature to ask for your help.' Molson did not understand the procedure governing the composition of cabinet committees and he was unsure if experts outside the cabinet could contribute.[159] He also asked Steel-Maitland, 'Was the War Cabinet system & that of the First National Government so unsatisfactory that there was really good reason for going back to the…Cabinet of 20 members?'[160] Young Conservative MPs like Molson felt it necessary to provide the party with literary contributions and ideas even when they had little expertise to draw on—a sure sign that they viewed political writing as an important aspect of building a successful parliamentary career.[161]

Like Percy and Morrison, Molson was a distinctly conservative 'revolutionary' and this explains why he was not tempted by the genuine revolutionary politics of Mosley. Martin Pugh includes Molson in his list of right-wing Conservative fascist sympathisers.[162] But as this account of Molson's politics demonstrates, he was not particularly right-wing. His initial membership of the January Club loses much of its significance when we consider his other political and literary interests, which included his work for Macmillan's Next Five Years Group, his constant defence of and support for Baldwin and the National Government in the periodical press, books, and on radio, his defence of the core values of the British constitution and parliamentary democracy, and his respect for senior Conservative intellectuals like Steel-Maitland. Corporatism interested him deeply, which explains why he joined the January Club, but this was one interest of many and it was the National Government, not rival movements of left or right, that suited the core of his political sensibilities. Molson was a young Conservative MP who was keen to use all available

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[159] John Colville was Secretary at the Department of Oversees Trade, 1931-35. Malcolm MacDonald was Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Dominions Office 1931-35.
[160] Hugh Molson to Arthur Steel-Maitland, 17 August 1934, Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, Arthur Steel-Maitland papers, GD193-255-147.
[161] Arthur Steel-Maitland to Hugh Molson, 4 September 1934, Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, Arthur Steel-Maitland papers, GD193-255-149. Steel-Maitland was more critical of the influence of party whips in the Commons.
[162] Pugh, *Hurrah for the Blackshirts*, p. 146.

channels to enhance his political career. Unfortunately, defeat at the 1935 election excluded him temporarily from achieving his goals.

Concluding Remarks

'Progressive' Conservatives played an important role in presenting the Conservative party as a dynamic force for political 'action' in the 1930s, especially amongst political elites. Admittedly this was only one public projection of the party's thinking, but it was an extremely important one. 'Progressives' claimed to offer Conservatism 'with a human face' in an age of mass democracy, but in most cases 'progressive' Conservative ideas were moderate and conservative. 'Progressives' sought to marry traditional Conservative values with aspects of what they recognised as 'modern' thought to address unemployment, but they also recognised the political currency to be gained from outflanking fascists like Mosley. Their ideas and strategies were influenced by self-interest, but they did have some sympathy for the unemployed. Elliot was the most obvious example of this, but he was also the most circumspect of the 'progressives' when it came to admiring the Italian Fascist state. Percy also worked hard to reconcile democracy with 'efficiency' in the 1930s, but his conservatism and his Christian conscience trumped his interest in the Italian 'Corporate State'. Elliot, Percy, and Morrison all raised their profiles within the party and the National Government because of their literary endeavours and performances on radio. Hogg's contributions allowed him to position himself as an important representative of Conservative youth, which marked him out as a man of the future. Despite Molson's praise for Baldwin's leadership, he was not as highly valued by CCO. He was often less partisan in his articles and broadcasts, while it is notable that he did not exhibit a Christian concern for unifying the nation.

In this respect, Molson was more like his friend Macmillan.[163] Both embraced a more secular 'modern' politics in public, which placed them just outside Baldwin's favoured circle

[163] Macmillan did not use Christian rhetoric in the same way as Baldwin or other 'progressives' in his articles, books, and broadcasts, but this did not mean that he always prioritised his secular 'progressive' economic and industrial thinking. Much depended on the occasion. When he addressed school boys in Stockton-on-Tees he argued that a new social philosophy would not be needed. He reaffirmed the importance of 'Christian teaching and the ageless truth it represents'. See Speech to Boys School, Stockton-on-Tees, c.1934, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Harold Macmillan papers,

of backbenchers in the 1930s. Williamson's important work on Baldwin and other high-ranking Christian Conservatives has shown that Conservative cabinet ministers prepared much of the moral ground for Churchill's rhetorical appeal and his defence of British civilisation against the paganism of German Nazism during the Second World War.[164] Likewise, Mathew Grimley has stated that the 1930s ushered in an important wave of Christian public revivalism in Britain.[165] Anglican views of the national community drew attention to the importance of voluntary service and status in the forming of personal character, which had to be retained alongside state welfare provision.[166] These views were promoted enthusiastically by Elliot, Percy, and Morrison, and to some extent by Hogg, but Macmillan and Molson focussed on their detailed schemes for economic and industrial reorganisation. How much this owed to individual temperament or the fact that they represented constituencies designated as distressed areas is difficult to know, but surely both factors helped shape their public rhetoric in elite media. It would seem that on the backbenches some Conservatives recognised the value in propagating a Christian sense of national community under Baldwin's leadership, while others declined to rely on such rhetoric. They would have to wait until the 1950s to enjoy ministerial success.

Interestingly, Hogg and Molson were prominent members of the Tory Reform Group (TRG), which was formed in 1943 to outline a 'progressive' Conservative course for social reform. Although the group's ideas were rejected by the party leadership, Alan Clark argues that by 1942, 'A feeling was abroad that the "future" lay more with the young careerists of the Tory Reform Committee [the group's official form] now so very publicly trying to shift the Conservative Party to the Left.'[167] The Thatcherite Clark judged their actions to be careerist, but he drew on Cuthbert Headlam's complaint in February 1943 to substantiate his claim: '[S]o many of our party—more especially the younger members—are more "left" than the Labour Party—terribly afraid of being thought un-progressive—and nowadays to be progressive you must be all out for totalitarian methods of administration however much you

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MS.Macmillan dep.c.721, fol.342-5. However, references to Christianity were not a common feature of Macmillan's speeches.

[164] Philip Williamson, 'Christian Conservatives and the totalitarian challenge 1933-40', *English Historical Review*, 115 (2000), pp. 607-42.

[165] Mathew Grimley, *Citizenship, community, and the Church of England. Liberal Anglican theories of the state between the wars* (Oxford, 2004), p. 201.

[166] Ibid., pp. 173-83.

[167] Alan Clark, *The Tories. Conservatives and the nation state, 1922-1997* (London, 1998), p. 238.

may condemn such methods in Germany or in Italy.'[168] 'Progressive' Conservative attitudes drew on the ideas of the 'Y.M.C.A.' in the 1920s (see Chapter Four), but they took on a distinctly corporatist form in response to the intellectual challenge of fascism, which peaked in 1934. This led the 'progressives' to develop different 'languages of corporatism', which drew attention away from Mosley and the BUF when it came to policy-making and party political manoeuvring. It was only later, under Eden and Macmillan, that Hogg and Molson prospered in government, but in the 1930s 'progressive' Conservatism nonetheless offered a valuable intellectual defence of the centrist, moderate politics of the National Government; a bulwark against the threat of both 'diehard' Conservatism and Mosleyite fascism.

[168] See Ball (ed), *Parliament and Politics in the Age of Churchill and Attlee*, pp. 353-4. Quoted in Clark, *The Tories*, p. 238.

Chapter Seven

'There is nothing to be done about it—except laugh': The Literary Response to 'Progressive' Conservatism and the National Government

Under Baldwin's leadership 'progressive' Conservatives were the most vocal advocates of Conservative opinion on radio, but they failed to monopolise the medium for their own political ends. Indeed, the 'progressives' would probably not have wanted to block other Conservatisms from being heard because some were still undecided about the potential consequences of their ideas. Conservatives of other shades of opinion continued to write for elite media and some were able to broadcast. This chapter focuses on a selection of MPs who offered 'traditional' Conservative views on capitalism and the workings of a market economy.[1] All were deeply sceptical about the nature of 'progressive' politics, but some still went on to support alternative ideas for agricultural and social reform, which did promote the use of more state intervention.

It begins with a brief discussion of Viscount Astor's opposition to the National Government's agricultural marketing schemes. It contrasts Astor's opposition to Walter Elliot's 'progressive' politics with his interest in the expansionist ideas of John Maynard Keynes. It then considers the Duchess of Atholl's opposition to 'planning' and her attempts to organise a comprehensive literary response with the help of Arthur Bryant and Arnold Wilson before the 1935 election. In addition, it analyses Wilson's role as a public intellectual, his scepticism about corporatist ideas for the reorganisation of industry, and his growing interest in using state intervention to advance the National Government's social policy. Wilson was a 'traditional' Conservative who claimed to have modified his politics and strengthened his faith in universal suffrage in the light of conversations with his own

[1] Another important feature of Conservative discourse in this period was imperialism. This strand of Conservatism was represented on radio and in elite media, most notably by L.S. Amery and Edward Grigg, who were also two of the party's most prolific writers. Cuthbert Headlam was another regular contributor to these mediums, but because his diaries are now in the public domain I have chosen to focus on other Conservative critics in this period. As MP for Barnard Castle (1931-35), Headlam was interested in the 'progressive' ideas of Macmillan, but he could not decide whether he was on his side or not. See Stuart Ball (ed.), *Parliament and politics in the age of Baldwin and MacDonald. The Headlam diaries 1923-1935* (London, 1992), p. 328, diary entry for 29 March 1935. Headlam became suspicious of Macmillan's increasing interest in Keynesian ideas, including the use of government funds to finance public works. Ibid., p. 335, diary entry for 26 June 1935. For the best example of his views on the major competing economic ideas of the period, see Cuthbert Headlam, 'National Expenditure', *Quarterly Review*, 523 (January 1935), pp. 152-70.

working-class constituents. The chapter ends with an assessment of the writings and broadcasts of Ian Horobin, a Nationalist MP who later joined the Conservative party. Horobin, the most vocal critic of the National Government's state interventionism, was one of only a handful of right wing sceptics to gain access to radio in this period. As a result, it was left mainly to a party outsider to present the most spirited case for economic orthodoxy.

Viscount Astor and the Importance of Consumerism in British Agriculture

Viscount Astor, the former Conservative MP for Plymouth (1910-18), and second husband of the Conservative MP, Nancy Astor, was one of the principal critics of the National Government's agricultural policies in the 1930s.[2] Astor chaired the League of Nations Union's advisory committee on agriculture and co-authored a number of important books on the subject, including two with the Oxford academic Keith Murray.[3] He also contributed regularly to the periodical press on agricultural issues across a range of conservative and liberal journals.[4] Astor was critical mainly of the consequences of the National Government's (and the previous Labour government's) agricultural marketing schemes. He recognised that a limited policy of marketing would do much to improve the condition of

[2] Nancy Astor succeeded her husband as MP for Plymouth when he was forced to inherit his father's peerage.

[3] Keith Murray was a member of the Oxford University Agricultural Research Institute. See Viscount Astor and Keith A.H. Murray, *Land and life. The economic national policy for agriculture* (London, 1932); and, *The planning of agriculture* (Oxford, 1933). The latter contained a forward by Arthur Salter. Astor also conducted a detailed report that was published later in the decade; see *British agriculture. A report of an enquiry by Viscount Astor and B. Seebohm Rowntree* (London, 1938). The first and third of these books were praised by reviewers in the *Times Literary Supplement* for their practical approaches to agricultural problems compared with the government's more theoretical view. The first was reviewed by the future Conservative MP Anthony Richard Hurd (Newbury 1945-64). See *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 April 1932. The third was reviewed by the influential nutritional physiologist and future Nobel peace prize winner John Boyd Orr. See *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 December 1938. Interestingly, Boyd Orr was a close friend of Walter Elliot and it is claimed he influenced the Minister of Agriculture to introduce free milk for school children. However, in his anonymous review of Astor's work he agreed that much of the National Government's agricultural policies during the 1930s were ill-conceived. Orr wrote that while the government had prevented the collapse of British agriculture, it had failed to address systematic long-term problems in the industry. See K. L. Blaxter, 'Orr, John Boyd, Baron Boyd Orr (1880–1971)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31519, accessed 6 Oct 2009].

[4] See Viscount Astor, 'Wheat', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 111 (March 1932), pp. 316-29; 'The quota craze', *Contemporary Review*, 142 (July 1932), pp. 10-20; 'Price control in agriculture', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 113 (April 1933), pp. 429-37; and, 'Farming or food control?', *National Review*, 102 (May 1934), pp. 602-12.

British farming, but he rejected the broader economic and organisational changes introduced by the National Government under the cloak of 'marketing'. Most of Astor's fears about the National Government related to Elliot's 1933 Agricultural Marketing Act, which resulted in nine marketing boards (some were already in operation, but others were still in the process of formation) by March 1933.[5] Still, Astor campaigned for a less restrictive interventionist policy for the remainder of the decade.

Astor detailed his criticisms of the government in an article on quotas for the *Contemporary Review* in July 1932 (just two months before Elliot was appointed as Minister of Agriculture). He argued that the root of the problem lay with the Conservative party's approach to the previous Labour government's Marketing Act of 1931. He wrote that the party leadership had chosen 'the proverbial "easy way"' by sanctioning the introduction of quotas in the belief that they could avoid the 'dear food' cry, which had long been associated with protectionist tariffs. As Astor argued, 'tariffs are easier to regulate, interfere less with international trade, and probably raise retail prices to a less extent than quotas'. He sensed that most MPs did not understand the consequences of the Marketing Act because they were more interested in electoral or party political calculations. At the same time, he suggested the National Government only won over farmers to the idea because they had refused to endorse protection without marketing and reorganisation; in other words, the government used the Agricultural Marketing Act to justify their case for tariffs. Even more worrying, he explained, was that British farmers accepted restrictions on their economic freedom because they realised that the new system meant producers could dictate prices to the consumer.[6]

Astor had been Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Food during the First World War when prices were fixed at a maximum to avoid shortages and to prevent profiteering. But, as he explained, the National Government's policy established minimum prices, which meant the state became the monopoly buyer because farmers could not dispose of their excess produce on the open market. The result was a more rigid system than that carried-out during the war, which convinced him to draw attention to what he saw as the increasingly 'bureaucratic mentality' of government. Astor rejected the idea that a central body or committee could predict the exact amount of produce produced each year or the amount

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[5] See Andrew Fenton Cooper, *British agricultural policy, 1912-36. A study in Conservative politics* (Manchester, 1989), p. 170. Marketing boards were set up for important commodities such as hops, potatoes, milk, pigs and bacon.
[6] Astor, 'The quota craze', p. 10.

needed for consumption. More importantly, he believed a rigid system of prices and quotas could not compensate for fluctuations in world markets. He also thought such a system prevented the organic innovatory approach of British agriculture, and he judged it to be uneconomic because some agricultural sectors would be sustained by artificial high prices, which were to be determined and paid for by the state. Farmers would no longer need to abandon products for economically viable alternatives and the national wealth would suffer as a result. Astor believed foreign competition was essential because it protected the consumer by putting market pressure on farmers to modernise their methods of production. Criticising the Marketing Act, he argued, 'This instrument has not been adopted on merit and after reflection, but is being brought forward because politicians hope to be able by its use to raise food prices without being accused of breaking election pledges.' He even admitted that a 'Socialist Import Board' was preferable to the government's plans because it would at least allow consumers to buy in the cheapest market.[7] 'Either Communism or ordinary competitive trading', he insisted, 'would aim at giving us more economical results than this new bureaucratic method.'[8]

Astor was willing to accept the standardising and grading of agricultural products, but he was not willing to give up entirely on the principles of a market economy. He strongly disliked state control of production and distribution. In his view, this had little to do with marketing. Predicting the National Government's plan to 'market' certain meat products (which Elliot would soon implement), he wrote, 'It has been drawn up either by men who not having administered war control at the Ministry of Food are unaware of the unexpected consequences and repercussions of interference with the ordinary laws of supply and demand in such commodities, or by men who are prepared for a complete and extended scheme of bureaucratic control.' But it was Astor's condemnation of the government that stood out most in his article, which once again demonstrates how Conservatives used the periodical press to vent their intellectual and political frustrations in the 1930s:

> Parliament is the victim of that disease well known to all students of history, an unduly swollen majority. Many supporters of the Government are new and, though able, very inexperienced…Unfortunately there has been no effective examination of the proposed food control on the Government side. The Labour Opposition not only are feeble, but they believe in price-fixing, in officialdom and in the control of private enterprise…There is a further danger. Many Conservative M.P.s for

[7] Astor, 'The quota craze', pp. 11-15.
[8] Ibid., p. 18.

> agricultural constituencies are echoing the demands of their farmers for "guaranteed markets".[9]

Astor's publications for educated and parliamentary readerships were intended to fill an intellectual void on agricultural policy, but also on the limits of state interventionism and free market economics.

Yet Astor was not averse to new ideas or economic change. Addressing elite Conservative readers, he challenged Elliot's Marketing Act before it was passed into legislation. Here, he showed that it was the 'negative' or 'restrictive' actions of the government that caused him most concern—though humanitarianism also seems to have influenced his thinking: 'Restriction of supply is itself a counsel of despair in a world where 30,000,000 unemployed persons and their families cannot purchase normal quantities of food, and where vast populations in China and India are living below any reasonable subsistence level.'[10] Opposing the government's 'negative' agricultural schemes, Astor preferred a much broader, comprehensive and 'positive' economic policy, which sought to stimulate employment and consumer demand for agricultural products. Keynes was his inspiration:

> The rational method of raising agricultural prices and of ensuring a satisfactory permanent demand for all the products of the farm, especially of those luxury products such as the best beef and certain types of fruit and vegetables, which offer good returns, would seem to be to secure a general rise in all wholesale commodity prices, with the concomitant increase of employment and consequently of demand. A large policy aiming at a fundamental improvement in the purchasing power of the people has recently been put forward by Mr. J. M. Keynes in the columns of *The Times*.[11]

Astor, then, preferred Keynesian expansion or demand management to artificial restrictions on supply, which meant he condemned Elliot and the government for initiating 'stop-gap' measures without considering the long-term outlook for British agriculture. Although Astor saw some good in Elliot's schemes—particularly in his Milk scheme because he believed it

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[9] Astor, 'The quota craze', pp. 19-20.
[10] Astor, 'Price control in agriculture', p. 429.
[11] Ibid., 432. Keynes' letters were published on four consecutive days. See *The Times*, 13-16 March 1933. The articles and two additional chapters made up his famous pamphlet, see John Maynard Keynes, *The means to prosperity* (London, 1933). For an excellent summary of Keynes' ideas and how they evolved between the publication of his more monetarist, *A treatise on money* (London, 1930), and his more expansionist or fiscal, *The general theory of employment, interest and money* (London, 1936), see Peter Clarke, *Keynes: the twentieth century's most influential economist* (London, 2009), especially chapters 3 &4.

secured a safer supply—his praise was clouded in sarcasm and disbelief: 'I may be unfair to our super-men in doubting their genius in anticipating the future…Times are new, and strange and chaotic. Is Walter Elliot among the prophets? At all events, he is showing imagination and courage in giving the House of Commons what it wanted—namely, action.'[12] Ironically, it was Astor's economic orthodoxy and his anti-socialism that led to his criticism of the government and his preference for Keynes and expansionist solutions. In general, he did not believe governments could succeed by interfering with trade and production (though he did favour temporary protectionist tariffs on foreign goods). Keynes seemed to offer Astor an alternative solution to the prevailing crisis—focus on expansionist ideas and you could still retain the age-old economic principles of international trade.

Astor's response to Elliot's policies also recognised the National Government's appropriation of the language of 'action'. He was critical of the 'progressives' because he interpreted their ideas and policies as career-minded, which was responsible for their 'negative' and largely 'uninspiring' approach to agricultural policy. However, Astor also failed to make an impact on the 'progressives' because they were only concerned with tweaking National Government policy. Unlike Astor and Keynes, the 'progressives' had too much to lose; it was always unlikely that they could be convinced to describe Neville Chamberlain's approach to raising prices as 'worse than useless'.[13] Macmillan might have been an important exception here because like Astor he began to increase his interest in Keynes' theories at this time, but he already lay outside that small pool of 'progressive' Conservatives who hoped for rapid career advancement under Baldwin.

The Representations of the Duchess of Atholl

Astor's agenda related mainly to his specialism of agriculture and his fears about the specific concrete policies of the National Government in the 1930s. However, other backbench Conservative MPs, like the Duchess of Atholl, detected a broader political shift to state interventionism in this period. As a result, she was determined to respond to the literary publications of 'progressive' Conservatives before the 1935 election. In a letter to Arthur Bryant, Atholl outlined her fear that both the Conservative leadership and the National

[12] Astor, 'Price control in agriculture', p. 437.
[13] *The Times*, 14 March 1933, p. 15.

Government were beginning to accept a broader 'progressive' economic and social programme. She asked Bryant if he would be willing to join a committee,

> which Sir Arnold Wilson and I are trying to get together to combat the Industrial Planning movement? Just before the House rose several of us managed to get together a meeting of Conservative Members to discuss this question. The meeting was attended by about 25 Members, most of them men who had supported the India Bill, and there was general agreement that we ought to do what we can to prevent the Government committing themselves to the compulsory schemes that have been suggested by some of our colleagues.[14]

Atholl was referring here to the powers proposed in Lord Melchett's Industrial Reorganisation (Enabling) Bill and the alternative proposals offered by Macmillan and his co-signatories in *Planning for Employment* and *The Next Five Years*.[15] Bryant agreed with Atholl's concerns and her proposal for a committee, but he also wrote, 'Whether anything can be done between now and the election, I am more doubtful of, but of one thing I am certain that the fight between those who are trying to destroy the spirit of English independence and liberty and those who wish to preserve it is likely to be a very long and bitter one.'[16]

Atholl based her fear of more state interventionism on 'progressive' Conservative activity both inside and outside of Parliament, but also on a series of publications by

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[14] Katherine Atholl to Arthur Bryant, 22 August 1935, Kings College London, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Arthur Bryant papers, C63/ Atholl.

[15] The background and fate of Lord Melchett's Industrial Reorganisation (Enabling) Bill, which he introduced in the House of Lords in November 1934, is thoroughly explored in Daniel Ritschel, *The politics of planning. The debate on economic planning in Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 183-231. Macmillan was chairman of the Industrial Reorganisation League, while Melchett served as its vice-chairman. Alongside P.E.P., the League had promoted industrial reorganisation since 1933, but the two groups differed on some important issues, which meant they eventually campaigned for separate proposals. P.E.P. called their idea the 'Self-Government for Industry Bill'. However, many of the details of the two proposals were similar. Ritschel states that there were three main reasons for the Bill's failure. The first related to the response of trade unions who were concerned about their roles in 'self-governing' industries; surprisingly, however, most did not want the workers themselves to have a larger say in the running of industries. The second was the mixed response from the business community. For example, the Federation of British Industries disliked the Bill because they believed it might lead to more state interference in industrial affairs; under voluntary schemes industries (or employers) could organise themselves and they were not accountable to the public (or Parliament). Owners of small businesses also resisted the Bill due to fears of monopolisation. The third and final reason for the Bill's rejection was the response of the Conservative party and the National Government. Although both took the issue of centralised planning seriously they did not want to move beyond accepted opinion in the business community or the Conservative party. Instead, they preferred the voluntary approach to industrial reorganisation and were willing to facilitate action if and when required without a systematic initiative.

[16] Arthur Bryant to Katherine Atholl, 3 September 1935, Kings College London, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Arthur Bryant papers, C63/ Atholl.

Kenneth Lindsay, Macmillan, and Percy, including *Conservatism and the Future*, *Planning for Employment*, and *The Next Five Years*.[17] Interestingly, as Atholl revealed to Bryant, it was Douglas Jerrold at the *English Review* who first proposed a Conservative literary response to the 'progressives'.[18] Atholl explained that she intended to accept Jerrold's suggestion, and that her aim was to organise a concerted opposition to planning in all its forms, within and without the Conservative party:

> Sir Arnold Wilson, I think, will undertake to draft this, with the help, probably, of a drafting committee…Sir Arnold and I, talking over the matter afterwards, felt that as Mr. Lloyd George has adopted Planning as part of his New Deal, we ought to have an organisation in the country to show what Planning means…My idea is that the Industrial Freedom League, or the Freedom Defence League, or some name of that kind. A special organisation seems necessary as with Lord Eustace Percy in the Cabinet and presumably engaged on some work of this kind, one cannot expect the Central Office to do any propaganda against Planning. Moreover, as I daresay you remember, they sent out a special letter of recommendation of "Conservatism and the Future", when it was published last April—a book to which he (ie. Eustace Percy) contributed a chapter urging the Conservative Party to take up Planning.[19]

Atholl's letter confirms that some 'traditional' Conservatives considered Percy's appointment to be a radical move by Baldwin and the National Government, and that they saw CCO as actively supporting 'progressive' Conservative ideas by promoting publications like *Conservatism and the Future*. It would seem Atholl's plan for a new league or pressure-group failed to materialise and the same might be said of the proposed literary response; at least in the form she outlined to Bryant. Although Atholl wrote an article on the matter for the *National Review* in which she outlined her own concerns and offered an assessment of industrial planning schemes as a whole, Wilson failed to publish a comprehensive response. Wilson did voice his concerns for industrial audiences and readerships, but it is clear that he was unsure about the potential benefits of 'progressive' Conservatism.[20] It seems Bryant was right to judge that little momentum could be gained from an organised campaign before the

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[17] Atholl admitted this much in an article for the periodical press; see Duchess of Atholl, 'Planning', *National Review*, 105 (September 1935). I refer here to a reprint from Edward Spiers' private papers. See Atholl, 'Planning', p. 3, Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre, Sir Edward Spiers papers, GBR/0014/SPRS 1/18.

[18] Evidently, Jerrold's views on the economy differed to those of the *English Review*'s foreign affairs editor Charles Petrie who strongly supported adopting elements if not all of the Italian 'Corporate State'. Jerrold also rejected Hugh Sellon's corporatist ideas; see Jerrold's review of Sellon's book *Whither Britain* in the *English Review*, 56 (January 1933), p. 8.

[19] Katherine Atholl to Arthur Bryant, 22 August 1935, Kings College London, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Arthur Bryant papers, C63/ Atholl.

[20] Wilson is discussed in more detail below.

1935 election, but typically this did not deter Atholl who continued to pursue the cause on her own.[21]

In her article, Atholl condemned Lord Melchett's Industrial Reorganisation (Enabling) Bill because she thought it would 'facilitate the creation of huge "combines"—indeed, of monopolies—and concentrate the control of industry in a few hands'. She also drew on *Planning for Employment*, adding that 'planners' freely admitted that agricultural marketing schemes were only the beginning of much wider reorganisation, which would lead to the 'compulsory amalgamation of the farm itself'. She also argued that despite their attempts to find a means of preventing the monopolisation of industries, they had not succeeded. She wrote, 'it is obvious that, "Planning" means the end of the "small shop-keeper," as of the small manufacturing business, and apparently of the individual farm'.[22] Atholl was adamant that 'planning' meant an end to private enterprise and that it was nothing short of socialism. She suggested that the plans put forward by Political and Economic Planning (P.E.P.) and the Next Five Years group would have the same affect, here echoing Astor's claims about agricultural planning. It would mean 'a limitation of the competition which is the only sure safeguard of consumers' interests; a restriction of opportunity for inventive genius, as Mr. Macmillan himself fears; and the end of freedom for the successful worker to become his own master, to "run his own show," to build it up successfully and to hand it on to those who come after him'. Like many Conservatives, Atholl thought the ideas of the 'progressives' would have a detrimental affect on the population's 'intelligence, initiative and character'.[23] Yet, as her correspondence with Bryant showed, the number of MPs interested in actively conspiring against the 'progressives' in Parliament was low, especially if we consider the party's electoral dominance during the 1930s.

Edward Spiers, one of the Conservative MPs to whom Atholl sent her article, was prepared to echo her concerns about plans to intensify industrial reorganisation: 'I read your article on "Planning" with great interest, and agree with a great deal of what you say. I should certainly not have supported Melchett's Bill as drafted. At the same time I do think

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[21] As Stuart Ball revealed, Atholl was not daunted later in the decade when she stood against most of her party on the government's policy of appeasement. Many Conservatives engaged to defeat her in the Kinross and West Perth by-election in December 1938; see Stuart Ball, 'The politics of appeasement: the fall of the Duchess of Atholl and the Kinross and West Perth by-election, December 1938', *The Scottish Historical Review*, LXIX (April 1990), pp. 49-83.
[22] Atholl, 'Planning', pp. 6-7.
[23] Ibid., p. 11.

that the negative arguments of the Planners are very strong, there is no doubt that an enormous amount of waste, inefficiency, and unnecessary duplication of services could and should be eliminated.' Spiers demonstrated his conservatism here because although he could see the benefit in cutting costs and making industry more efficient, he did not wish to develop these ideas further. He wrote to Atholl, 'When it comes to positive remedies however, it is very difficult indeed to draw up a waterproof scheme, that is one which criticism cannot easily demolish.'[24] This reluctance to embrace radical change without party consensus was exploited by vocal critics like Atholl who argued against planning in Parliament and in the periodical press, but Spiers' interest in rationalisation, if not comprehensive reorganisation, surely indicates why many Conservatives put up little resistance to the overtures of the 'progressives' during the 1930s. Unlike Atholl, they had no absolute objection to the new, progressive talk about 'planning'.

A Modern Day Cobbett or Fellow Traveller of the Right: Arnold Wilson

Unhappily for Atholl, Arnold Wilson's views on 'progressive' Conservatism never resulted in a comprehensive literary response to the ideas of Percy and Macmillan. Nevertheless, it is possible to reconstruct Wilson's attitudes towards 'progressive' or corporatist plans for industrial reorganisation. This section, then, contrasts these arguments with Wilson's support for more state intervention in areas of social policy, such as industrial assurance. Wilson's politics, and his changing attitude towards democracy, are placed in the context of his religious thinking and his role as a public intellectual. But before we can address these issues at length we must familiarise ourselves with Wilson's reputation amongst historians.

Wilson was an 'appeaser' in the sense that he was willing to go further than most Conservative MPs to preserve peace with Germany in the 1930s.[25] He accepted invitations from the Nazi party elite to visit Germany on a number of occasions, which meant he was part of 'Ribbentrop's Kindergarten'.[26] Despite Wilson's consistent rejection of German anti-Semitism and his uneasy view of the country's concentration camps, he often praised other

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[24] Edward Spiers to Katherine Atholl, undated [c. September 1935], Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre, Sir Edward Spiers papers, GBR/0014/SPRS 1/18.
[25] Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, *The appeasers* (London, 1963), p. 46, cited in Richard Griffiths, *Fellow-travellers of the right: British enthusiasts for Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 1983), p. 158.
[26] Griffiths, *Fellow-travellers*, p. 225. The phrase was used by Lady Ravensdale.

aspects of the Nazi regime in the periodical press and on radio.[27] Richard Griffiths dealt admirably with Wilson's views on foreign dictatorships and he largely dismissed the idea that there was any sinister motivation behind his interest in Italian Fascism and German Nazism.[28] But some historians continue to cite Wilson as an influential anti-Baldwin Tory MP and radical-right figure, a view based on his mixed approach to the Nazi regime and his involvement with the *English Review* luncheon club in the 1930s.[29] However, as Griffiths appreciated, Wilson was an extremely complicated character and it would be wrong to pigeon-hole him in this way. It has already been shown how pro-Baldwin 'progressive' Conservatives, like Hugh Molson and W.S. Morrison, attended the *English Review* luncheon club before publishing their speeches in the review itself. Like 'progressive' Conservatives, Wilson had much in common with Baldwin, most notably a strong devotion to both Church and country, but it seems this has been overlooked by historians because of Wilson's decision to position himself as an independent Conservative voice in Parliament.[30] One might suggest that his stance was in-keeping with his wider role as a public intellectual. Furthermore, it is wrong to characterise Wilson as an anti-Baldwin figure because he made

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[27] For Wilson's impressions of Germany under the Nazi regime see Arnold Wilson, 'Germany in May', *English Review*, 58 (May 1934), pp. 691-706; and, 'A fortnight in Germany', *The Listener* (30 May 1934), p. 908; and, 'The riddle of Germany. I. July impressions', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 116 (August 1934), pp. 152-61.

[28] Griffiths, *Fellow-travellers*, pp. 79, 83-4, 158-62, 264, 365. Wilson also delivered an important lecture on 'The Outlook of the British People' during a speaking tour of Germany. Before he embarked for Germany he cleared his address with Anthony Eden who was Minister of the League of Nations. Eden found no reason to alter Wilson's view, which expressed anti-totalitarian and Christian sentiments. Wilson made the clear distinction between what was right for Britain and what was being carried out by the Nazi regime in Germany. See Arnold Wilson to Anthony Eden, 23 April 1934, Birmingham University Library, Avon papers, AP14/1/382.

[29] Martin Pugh, *Hurrah for the Blackshirts! Fascists and fascism in Britain between the wars* (London, 2005), pp. 205, 268, 282. Pugh no doubt gleaned Wilson's anti-Baldwin stance from Griffiths work, but as we shall see this was not always the case and such judgement is an over-simplification; see Griffiths, *Fellow-Travellers*, p. 22. Pugh also quotes Wilson's pro-Franco views, but this does not tell us much seen as nearly all Conservatives thought this way in the 1930s. Only the Duchess of Atholl was willing to rebel and support the Republican side; see Sheila Hetherington, *Katharine Atholl 1874-1960* (Aberdeen, 1989), pp. 165-76.

[30] Wilson often wrote about his religious views; Arnold Wilson, 'Church and state: quis separabit?', *English Review*, 56 (January 1933), pp. 9-22; 'What does the Church stand for?', *The Spectator* (2 November 1934), pp. 667-8; and, 'Parliament at prayer', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 121 (April 1937), pp. 433-69. Wilson was against the Bishop of Durham's arguments for disestablishing the Church of England during the 1930s, but he also criticised churchmen for interfering in political affairs without acquiring an adequate knowledge of events and policies. He wanted churchmen to speak to the individual soul, which he thought was vital for influencing society in a positive way. These arguments reflected his strong religious sympathies and his commitment to retaining a separation of Church and state.

numerous attempts to cement support for the National Government in his constituency and elsewhere, as his published diary underscored. At the same time, Wilson made private overtures to Baldwin based on their shared religious interests, and often quoted the Conservative leader's words not just in his constituency, but also in his books, periodical writings, and on radio.[31] Finally, Wilson overturned his scepticism about British democracy largely because of the challenge posed by political extremism at home and abroad.

Wilson was certainly well-known in elite political circles because of two of his literary endeavours. The first was his editorship of the *Nineteenth Century and After*; the broadest and most popular conservative monthly. The second was his books, which were based on his diaries; the first in the series was titled *Walks and Talks*. Wilson serialised later volumes of the series in the *Nineteenth Century and After*, which ensured his arguments reached a larger readership. The final book *Thoughts and Talks* was even more widely read because it was reprinted as a special edition for the Right Book Club. Wilson's literary reputation increased in conservative circles after the publication of *Walks and Talks* because he employed a distinct literary style, which drew on notions of 'Englishness' and rural nostalgia. Not only was it unusual for a Conservative MP to detail his private conversations in this way, but he compared himself with a famous journeyman of England's past, William Cobbett. This impressed John Buchan who ranked Wilson *en par* with another of the party's cherished intellectuals, Eustace Percy:

> We do not often get new recruits to Parliament with so full a life behind them—the Indian Army, the Indian Political Service, high points in the war and Mesopotamia, business, literature. There is one thing about Sir Arnold that especially endears him to me. He is not only a student of politics, he is a tramp. When he wants to know what his constituents are thinking he does not wait for them to come to political meetings and ask questions, he wanders about in the highways and hedges and talks to them. He has written a book which I think has more of the soul of rural England in it than anything since William Cobbett.[32]

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[31] See Chapter One for Wilson's private correspondence with Baldwin. Wilson quoted Baldwin positively on numerous occasions during his constituency tours as recorded in his books. As there are too many occasions to mention here see the indexed entries for Baldwin in Arnold Wilson, *Walks and talks: the diary of a member of parliament in 1933-4* (Oxford, 1934); *Walks and talks abroad: the diary of a member of parliament in 1934-6* (Oxford, 1936); and, *Thoughts and talks: the diary of a member of parliament, 1935-7* (London, 1938).

[32] Speech by John Buchan at the National Book Trade Provident Society Dinner, 25 February 1935. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, John Buchan papers, 1st Baron Tweedsmuir, Acc-7214, Mf.SS.312. The book in question was the first in the series of his 'Walks and Talks'.

Wilson's status as a public intellectual resulted in his invitation to address young Conservatives at Ashridge on subjects like public opinion and the use of the written word.[33]

In June 1933 Wilson outlined a strategic, hierarchical view of the forming of public opinion, which related to one million individuals in the country: 'The people whose opinions really matter in England.'[34] This may appear to be elitist, but one might argue that this figure was quite high considering Wilson's biographer characterised him as 'one of the last and the noblest' Victorians.[35] What was odd about the 'public' he identified was that it amounted to an inflated assessment of the number of readers of political books and periodicals during the interwar period. Wilson argued that weeklies, like monthly and quarterly reviews, were still to be found in the reading-rooms of gentleman's clubs and that they were 'very widely read by men and women in responsible positions'.[36] He insisted that quality writing and reasoned argument would always prosper over the less sophisticated writing of the popular press:

> The more sincere and the more adequate the literary style, the better informed the writer, the greater will be the ultimate effect. The more ephemeral the form of the printed matter, the more tendentious and partial its appeal, the less will it impress the mind of the reader. Hence the progressive decline in the influence of the popular press on public opinion and the slowly increasing influence of reviews and books.[37]

Was Wilson extremely naïve or were his words a mix of wishful thinking and shameless self-promotion? It is difficult to know, but his words confirm why many Conservative MPs still valued these media despite their inability to reach and influence the wider, mass public. Wilson was not wholly unaware of the increasing importance of mass media because he discussed these issues in his books, but he was mainly interested in capturing the imagination of political and social elites.

Wilson remained attached to the political practices of the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods. He admitted that small constituency meetings were 'a waste of time but for the presence of reporters from the provincial Press, whose representatives enable a Member this way to reach a great public who never, even at election times, go to a political meeting'.[38] This and elite mediums were his preferred literary platforms, but he slowly recognised the

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[33] It is evident from the text that the following articles were re-printed lectures: Arnold Wilson, 'Success in the work of life', *Ashridge Journal*,11 (December 1932), pp. 6-14; and, 'The Formation of public opinion through the written word', *Ashridge Journal*, 15 (June 1933), pp. 6-17.
[34] Wilson, 'The formation of public opinion', p. 17.
[35] John Marlowe, *Late Victorian: the life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* (London, 1967), p. 384.
[36] Wilson, 'The formation of public opinion', p. 14.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Wilson, *Thoughts and talks*, p. 292.

increasing importance of radio. After all, Wilson broadcast regularly during this period.[39] But it seems he was only truly reconciled to its value after the Coronation of Edward VIII in May 1936: 'So perfect was the relaying system that the service could be followed on almost every grandstand on the route as well as in every city and hamlet in the Kingdom and over the great part of the world. The single fact invested the ceremony with a wholly new significance which I, for one, had not in the least realised.'[40] Furthermore, Wilson sat on a parliamentary committee under Lord Moyne during May 1936, which analysed the outlook of the British film industry. This prompted Wilson to conclude, 'the effect of the cinema on the public mind is probably more important than that of the Press. It is, for many, the principal source of new ideas, and of mental attitudes'.[41] Of course, this did not include his most learned self. Wilson refused to abandon his elite forums for political communication because he understood that it was political elites who implemented policy. However, he did recognise the potential of broadcasting for cementing communitarian, moral, and national values in the country.[42]

Wilson's reputation as a writer, particularly amongst members of the Conservative party, would have ensured any intervention on the merits of 'progressive' Conservatism an influential readership, but, as we have seen, he chose not to follow up Atholl's promptings on this issue. Although Wilson positioned himself as a major critic of corporatist plans for industrial reorganisation he had doubts about his own views, which explains why he was reluctant to take part in a more organised response. As shown in Chapter Six, Wilson read Eustace Percy's *Government in Transition* and used Percy's arguments to counter socialism in his constituency, but he continued to reject 'progressive' economic ideas elsewhere. As

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[39] Wilson broadcast on a considerable range of subjects; Arnold Wilson, 'Hunters, artists and philosophers', *The Listener* (28 January 1931), p. 129; 'Wanderings in South America', *The Listener* (4 March 1931), p. 354; 'Persia and the oil concessions', *The Listener* (14 December 1932), p. 841; 'The national character-tradition versus change', *The Listener* (4 April 1934), p. 582; 'A fortnight in Germany', *The Listener* (30 May 1934), p. 908; 'In trouble-X. Is punishment a crime?', *The Listener* (4 July 1934), p. 28; 'In search of facts', *The Listener* (3 October 1934), p. 555; 'Journey to Persia', *The Listener* (24 October 1934), p. 681; 'Industrial assurance', *The Listener* (31 October 1934), p. 729; 'Women and children-first or last?', *The Listener* (7 October 1936), p. 676; 'What I would do with it', *The Listener* (16 December 1936), p. 1123; 'Old age pensions-is reform needed?', *The Listener* (9 March 1939), p. 525; 'Conscription and democracy', *The Listener* (27 April 1939), p. 869.
[40] Wilson, *Thoughts and talks*, p. 332.
[41] Ibid., p. 151.
[42] Wilson, 'The national character', p. 582. Wilson followed Baldwin and Bryant in his depiction of the English 'national character', which boosted the appeal of the Conservative leader and the National Government.

early as October 1934 he drew attention to the poor performance of the National Government's agricultural policies for the BBC: 'The Ministry of Agriculture's Statistical Report…read in conjunction with the University of Cambridge Economic Survey…shows that prices of farm products were lower in 1933 than 1931—only 5 per cent above pre-War rates, but wages were up 60 per cent…No wonder farmers cannot employ as many men now as in 1914!'[43] These figures were damaging for the government, but even more so coming from a National Conservative MP. In private, Wilson admitted to Amery that he was 'worried by the bureaucratic Socialist tendency of Elliot's marketing boards'.[44] In his broadcast, Wilson also criticised the basic assumptions of 'progressive' Conservatives. He explained that 'the Census of Production suggests, mechanisation and rationalisation, on the average, have not greatly increased the productive capacity of the worker in industry in the last ten years'.[45]

These statistics informed Wilson's response to 'progressive' Conservatism at the sixteenth annual meeting of the Chemical Engineering Group in May 1935. Wilson criticised the government's agricultural reforms, but this time he tried hard not to abandon Elliot in a desert of burnt out political wrecks:

> Mr. Elliot had given fresh hope, fresh ideas, and fresh methods to farming…But his plans had not developed as he had hoped, though no doubt they would succeed if left to the farmers themselves, by a process of trial and error, to reach conclusions. The trials would be those of the consumer, and the errors would be those of the farmer—but that was inevitable. What had been done was to increase the market value of shares in every distributing organization handling agricultural produce—the great aggregations of capital owned by anonymous shareholders, and directed by able and ambitious men, who sought power for its own sake.[46]

Again, these were damaging words for the government. Wilson assumed that his views would not damage the government because he addressed an elite, professional audience, but it is possible that his criticisms broke out into other forms of media because the same arguments featured heavily in socialist newspapers during the 1935 general election campaign.[47]

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[43] Wilson, 'In search of facts', p. 555.
[44] L.S. Amery diary, 25 September 1934, Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre, AMEL 7/28.
[45] Wilson, 'In search of facts', p. 555.
[46] Wilson's speech was reported in *Chemistry and Industry: Journal of the Society of Chemical Industry*, 54 (10 May 1935), pp. 460-2.
[47] See *Forward*, 9 November 1935, p. 4. One sub-headline read 'More Money for Middlemen. National Government Has Not Helped Agriculture'.

Wilson was also determined to undermine 'progressive' ideas for the reorganisation of industry. Like Atholl, his criticisms related mainly to Lord Melchett's Industrial Reorganisation (Enabling) Bill. He was deeply concerned about the fate of the consumer and the small producer if a corporatist system was to be introduced. In such a system each industry would form a council, which then recommended a compulsory scheme of reorganisation for government approval. Wilson was appalled, 'the effect would be that the greater units in any given industry could, through the council, control the smaller units, prevent price-cutting, enable prices to be raised and profits to be made, not by the most efficient, but on the whole by the less efficient, even the least efficient, in a group'.[48] Wilson could not accept state interference in industry because he believed commodities should 'find their own market at their own price'. Key to his thinking here was the belief that without personal economic freedom people would expect the State to unload some of their personal responsibilities, which affected individual character. He underlined his moral concerns for the development of British society: 'In order that the good might prevail there must be life and vigour in the people—and this could be only where freedom existed.'[49] In *Walks and Talks Abroad* Wilson similarly demonstrated his commitment to rejecting the idea of applying the principles of the 'Corporate State' in Britain. He quoted a speech he made in Germany: '[T]he Corporate State was a conception which might well suit a partially industrialized but predominantly agricultural State such as Italy, but was, to my mind, wholly inapplicable to a nation which lives by overseas trade.'[50] Wilson believed in an improved tariff system for both agriculture and industry within a system of Empire (but not Free) Trade.[51]

If Wilson had major doubts about state interference in economic affairs, his attitudes shifted on social policy during the 1930s, most notably on industrial assurance or 'burial money' for working-class workers. Wilson chose to address the issue when the Departmental Committee on Industrial Insurance published its longstanding report in July 1933. As a result, he was asked by the BBC to debate the subject with Joseph Burn, the General Manager of Prudential Insurance. As Wilson explained, 'hundreds of letters of complaint…reached me from all over England when I first spoke on Industrial Assurance in

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[48] *Chemistry and Industry*, pp. 460-2.
[49] Ibid., p. 462. I discuss this issue in more detail below.
[50] Wilson, *Walks and talks abroad*, pp. 32-3.
[51] Wilson, *Walks and talks*, p. 235.

Parliament'. The public's response convinced him of the need for reform. He judged that the current system of insurance, which was run entirely by private insurance companies, was not only in some cases corrupt, but economically wasteful. Wilson argued that 'most of the policies would not be taken out except under pressure from canvassers', while difficulties arose when insurance companies refused to pay because there were 'thousands of cases where the assured person is too poor, or too ignorant, to appeal'.[52] Wilson was moved by his own social concern for the working classes, but he also recognised an opportunity to reduce the costs of working-class industrial assurance, which he hoped would offer a means of stimulating demand in the economy. If a higher percentage of wages could be left to fructify in the pockets of the workers, then a new source of revenue could be mobilised out of existing expenditure to provide for greater capital investment. Wilson was following a Keynesian diagnosis of Britain's economic problems, but he was looking for an alternative medicine to that being offered by Keynes and his followers. For example, he did not want to adopt public works schemes or large capital projects, which Lloyd George had recently embraced in his New Deal, nor did he hope to finance expansionism with budget deficits or other forms of public borrowing. Wilson's idea equated to another form of rationalisation. The difference was that his plan included genuine social reform.

In his broadcast, Wilson spoke of his opposition to the 'nationalisation' of industrial assurance, but he advocated other means of 'thrift' for the working classes. He thought the Post Office should be allowed to advertise its own Savings Bank in order to provide competition for industrial assurance companies because he believed interest rates on savings would provide a better and more reliable return without resorting to over-expenditure or corruption.[53] But surely he overlooked some of the financial difficulties facing working-class families, especially during periods of unemployment; the temptation would always be to cash in on savings to sustain life at the expense of death.[54] However, after receiving 'a very large number of letters' following his broadcast, Wilson decided to embark on a two year academic study of the problem with the economist Hermann Levy.[55] In fact, Wilson's

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[52] Wilson, 'Industrial assurance', pp. 729-80.
[53] Ibid.
[54] See Paul Johnson, *Saving and spending: the working class economy in Britain* (Oxford, 1985), and James E. Cronin's review article on the subject, in *Journal of Economic History*, 47 (September 1987), pp. 775-7.
[55] Arnold Wilson and Hermann Levy, *Industrial assurance. An historical and critical study* (Oxford, 1937), p. xiv.

investigations changed his view on the solution to the problem quite considerably. Gone was the Post Office scheme and in came nationalisation. Unsurprisingly, he had to justify this change in outlook for Conservative readers:

> The proposed nationalization of industrial assurance, so far as concerns persons insured under previous and future National Health Insurance Acts, should not be regarded as an attack upon the principles or practice of commercial insurance generally, still less an attempt to undermine the capitalist system. As a member of the Tory party, and as a supporter of the present National Government and of its predecessor, I believe in and support the maintenance of a structure of society in which the capitalistic system and private enterprise are a vital and irreplaceable part…But it does not follow that private enterprise can, in the public interest, continue to be allowed to monopolize all departments of our national life.[56]

Wilson praised Gladstone and Lloyd George as social pioneers who had been forced to compromise on industrial insurance because of the demands of parliamentary politics. He then informed Conservatives that if they rejected his preference for an extension of state-controlled social services they would be turning their backs on 'the principles of the founder of the Tory party'—presumably he meant Disraeli here.[57]

The reason Wilson adopted nationalisation, which would have merged industrial insurance with existing legislation on health and old-age pensions, was that he was convinced that it would provide a cheaper system of insurance, which would benefit the economy. It would prevent the extravagances of some burials and eliminate the indignity of those forced to endure a 'pauper funeral'. Wilson was quick to note that the Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain, had given little consideration to the potential economic benefits of reforming industrial assurance. He also argued that would-be reformers like Amery, William Beveridge, Lloyd George, Macmillan, and Percy had all failed to take the issue seriously.[58] Despite Wilson's resistance to the corporatist ideas of the 'progressives', we know that he took their ideas seriously because he read their books and articles. They influenced his willingness to embrace more state intervention in areas of social policy, but he was never willing to abandon the core principles of Britain's economic system. His plans for social reform were limited to those areas where cost-cutting would lead to economic and social improvement.

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[56] Wilson and Levy, *Industrial assurance*, p. xvi.
[57] Ibid., p. xxiv.
[58] Wilson and Levy, *Industrial assurance*, p. xxi. Alongside the works of the 'progressives' discussed in Chapter Six, he had already read L.S. Amery's *The forward view* (London, 1935). He consulted Beveridge during the initial stages of his research on industrial assurance.

If Wilson's academic investigations into industrial assurance changed his attitude to state intervention, then his interaction with working-class constituents and his broadcasting career seems to have changed his attitude to democracy. Before his election as MP for Hitchin in June 1933, Wilson informed Conservatives that the ballot box was not the only way of protecting peoples' liberties. He explained that it had already been abandoned by many civilised countries and that it was 'based upon a fallacy' that was 'inconsistent with human nature'.[59] This was a very dramatic and reactionary attitude towards democracy in times of crisis. Wilson's main grievance was the lack of educated participation in democracy; citizens, he argued, did not show enough interest in elections and legislative action. But Wilson's view of democracy changed soon after his constituency tour, which was recorded in *Walks and Talks*. As he explained, the book was written in order 'to convince those who read it…that the territorial system of representation is, or can be made, more effective in practice than any system based only on trades, professions, or other interests'.[60] Wilson also revealed that his book was a response to the unconstitutional views of Mosley and Stafford Cripps. In fact, Wilson actively defended democracy in his constituency against fascist sympathisers:

> The English people were good through and through, and in no country was there such a steady movement from one stratum of society to another. I wanted to see many and great changes, but they must come, not as the outcome of out-of-date theories of dons whose spiritual home was in Fleet Street, but from experience, and I recited to their obvious satisfaction bits of Burke, Emerson, Disraeli, and Ruskin. The circle grew larger.[61]

The readership of Wilson's book would have been confined largely to the political classes, but still he argued against autocracy on the grounds that he trusted the public to pronounce judgement on important issues. He wrote, '[the] working-man…is moved less by tradition and more by argument, and is better able than his predecessors to exercise his duties as an elector'.[62] He even dedicated his book to his constituents.

Wilson also praised the British electorate in his broadcasts. In April 1934 Wilson took part in a debate on the English 'national character'. He defended the 'national character' against political opponents who challenged its value in view of continental outlooks. Wilson

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[59] Wilson, 'The forming of public opinion', p. 15.
[60] Wilson, *Walks and talks*, p. viii.
[61] Ibid., p. 17.
[62] Ibid., p. 230.

did not want the 'national character' to change, but he did think it would have to evolve to meet the demands of 'modern' conditions. Wilson proclaimed, 'I have too great a respect for my fellows and too great a confidence in them. I believe in our nation, and above all, in their character.'[63] Wilson had been a colonial administrator in India and Iraq before returning to Britain in the 1920s. Despite spending much time with other races and peoples, he argued that it was his fellow countrymen of all classes that impressed him most: 'I am still more at my ease in a public-house or a third-class railway carriage than in the company of the most cultured foreigners, even when I know the language.'[64] He located most of the qualities of the English 'national character' in honest hard work, but he was influenced by his religious convictions because he believed in the moral capacity of the nation:

> That is the secret of true aristocracy—a standard of conduct, held with conviction. And this is not peculiar to gentlemen. You will find it at its best amongst skilled workers who, because they value skill and learning, have impressed themselves and made an impression at home and abroad which has given the Englishmen in foreign parts a reputation which is the envy of the Civilised world. But it has nothing to do either with their education or their wealth.[65]

Although Wilson was initially hostile to democracy because he considered it to be unreliable in a crisis, it seems that direct experience of public politics persuaded him to adopt an overtly democratic stance. He seems to have been genuinely surprised by the character and knowledge of his constituents, particularly by the average working man. However, it is difficult to judge who Wilson was referring to here. He was deeply concerned about leaving the Conservative party's 'natural' supporters behind in favour of manual workers. Nevertheless, he wrote his book to show that universal suffrage worked and that the constitution was fundamentally sound. Instead of corporatism, he recognised the need to help educate Britain's new democracy and he aimed to convince other Conservatives of the same. Soon after his election Wilson admitted that although he was a Conservative he was not 'much of a party man'.[66] While this was true, Wilson's independent Conservative stance was in no sense a threat to Baldwin and the National Government. On the contrary, from this

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[63] Wilson, 'The national character', p. 582.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Wilson, *Walks and talks*, p. 237.

vantage point he could offer useful intellectual support to the Conservative debate on social reform and democracy in the 1930s.[67]

The 'Displeasures' of Ian Horobin

If we exclude the complex figure of Wilson, Atholl was almost a lonely Conservative voice in elite media. The only other consistent defender of the principles of the free-market and private enterprise was a Nationalist MP, Ian Horobin, who became a Conservative MP in 1951 and joined Harold Macmillan's Conservative government in 1958.[68] Horobin ran as a Nationalist rather than a National Conservative candidate in 1931 because his constituency of Southwark Central was a Labour stronghold. As a supporter of free-market economics he was able to unite the National Liberal and National Conservative voters in the constituency against Labour.[69] Horobin often challenged 'progressive' Conservatives in elite media. For example, he outlined his own 'case for orthodoxy' against Macmillan's 'case for expansion' in *The Spectator* in April 1933. At times, his political commentary appeared to be personal (not to say circular): 'I DISTRUST all "expansionists." As politicians they are sure to be dangerous, for they found their proposals on defective theories of money. And one can see at a glance that these theories are sure to be defective from the sort of politicians to which they appeal.'[70] These comments were mainly directed at Macmillan, which is ironic considering the two MPs were reunited in government during the late 1950s (Horobin came to Macmillan's rescue on the economy by bringing his wealth of experience of arguing for financial 'orthodoxy' over economic 'expansion' into the government after the infamous 1958 Treasury resignations; or at least Macmillan hoped the public would perceive things that way).[71] Horobin also tried to discredit Keynes' *A Treatise on Money* in his article for

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[67] As Ramsden argues, the Conservative leadership was looking into potential areas for more advanced social reform (more state intervention) before an expected general election in 1939-40. So Wilson was not an entirely isolated figure. See John Ramsden, '"A party for owners or a party for earners?" How far did the British Conservative party really change after 1945?', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 37 (1987), pp. 55-6.

[68] See Horobin's obituary in *The Times*, 8 July 1976. Horobin was Conservative MP for Oldham East (1951-59).

[69] For a summary of the approach to the election in Southwark Central, see *The Times*, 16 October 1931, p. 8.

[70] Ian Horobin, 'The case for orthodoxy', *The Spectator*, 7 April 1933, p. 493.

[71] Horobin was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Power by Macmillan after the Treasury resignations of 1958. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Peter Thorneycroft, the Economic

The Spectator. He accused Keynes of creating a 'false doctrine' that had led to the production of a 'contagion of currency-reform epidemics'. Unlike Astor, Horobin was not willing to compromise some tried and tested economic principles to save others from jeopardy. Instead, he was wholly dismissive of 'progressive' Conservatism. He thought Keynesian solutions would have little or no affect on the unemployment problem and that they were only a distraction from more important economic issues. Horobin wrote, 'The patient has a fever and the doctor has been so anxious to keep his clinical thermometer stable that he has confined his treatment to putting it out in the cool night air with the cat. Others desire to smash the thermometer altogether. It is, however, not the thermometer but the patient who is ill.' He was referring here to the stabilization of prices, which meant on one hand he rejected the government's restrictive state interventionism (quotas, marketing, and tariffs), while on the other he rejected Keynes' monetary ideas. As Horobin so eloquently put it, 'You cannot cure gangrene in one end of the body politic by giving the other end dropsy.'[72]

For Horobin, the most crucial economic factor behind recovery was the retention of low interest rates and he argued monetary policies would only serve to raise interest rates in the long-term. Therefore, he supported the National Government's economic policy unreservedly: 'This vital achievement [low interest rates]—a condition preceded and *sine quâ non* to any industrial recovery—was carried out by taking the directly contrary advice to that of Mr. Keynes and Mr. Lloyd George.' Horobin wanted to protect the taxpayer and the consumer, but he also believed in cheap money because he thought it resulted in slow economic recovery as individuals sought increasingly to take advantage of low interest loans to boost private business. Horobin thought that the more money the government borrowed for large-scale investments the more likely it was that the world's money supply would

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Secretary to the Treasury, Nigel Birch, and the Financial Secretary, Enoch Powell, resigned because they wanted more dramatic cuts in public expenditure than Macmillan was willing to sanction. Put simply, all three wanted to address the problem of inflation, but Macmillan was not willing to cut as much public expenditure and risk more unemployment. The Treasury resignations are often seen as representative of the party's move from Keynesian to Thatcherite economics. However, for an in-depth analysis of the incident and the historiographical debate surrounding it, see E.H.H. Green, 'The treasury resignations of 1958: a reconsideration', in E.H.H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism. Conservative political ideas in the twentieth century* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 192-213. Horobin's appointment was interpreted by the press as a shrewd political manoeuvre by Macmillan. It showed his commitment to financial prudence in preparation for the vote of confidence in government that was about to take place in Parliament the following week. See *The Times*, 18 January 1958, p. 6.

[72] Horobin, 'The case for orthodoxy', p. 493.

contract and become more expensive.[73] Horobin tackled these economic issues in more detail in his book *The Pleasures of Planning* (incidentally, the book was published by Macmillan And Co.). There, Horobin reinforced his economic orthodoxies by advocating a return to stable currency exchange; in other words, he wanted to work towards a permanent rate of exchange between the US Dollar, the British Pound, and the gold countries. Horobin wanted to mitigate the consequences of Britain coming off the Gold Standard and one of the chief motives behind his strategy was the need to tame Roosevelt's inflationary experiments in the USA, which he thought disrupted world trade and encouraged large capital transfers between countries.[74] However, he was critical of the government's agricultural policies. He wrote, 'far and away the most important aim (and the principal aim of all opponents of the modern extremist socialism) should be the repeal of the Agricultural Marketing Acts'. Horobin agreed with Astor and preferred moderate, temporary, protectionist tariffs on food stuffs to 'bureaucratic tyranny'. Therefore, he appealed to liberal members of the National Government to wake up to the consequences of the government's Marketing Acts, warning, 'these experiments are waiting to fall like ripe plums into the lap of any extremist Government'. Horobin wanted to re-establish a clear dividing line between the two main political parties: the Conservative party should stand for moderate tariffs, leaving the Labour party to offer state intervention or 'bureaucracy'. He disliked the way the Conservative dominated National Government blurred these political boundaries, especially through 'socialism á la Walter Elliot'.[75]

Interestingly, Horobin also outlined plans for the compulsory sale of municipal housing to private individuals and public utility societies. This shows how some of the policies introduced by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in the 1980s had deep routes within the party, even if these ideas were only the property of minority voices until the Macmillan era. Like Thatcher, Horobin preferred housing to be the concern of the private individual, rather than the responsibility of government or local councils. He believed such a policy would serve to encourage private investment in the housing market, while at the same time he thought it would act as a test-case for the potential removal of other competencies of local government.[76] Horobin's economic ideas were based on a broader policy of limited

[73] Horobin, 'The case for orthodoxy', pp. 493-4.
[74] Ian Horobin, *The pleasures of planning* (London, 1935), pp. 183-5.
[75] Ibid., pp. 186-8.
[76] Ibid., pp. 188-9.

government. He wrote that economic recovery would only be possible 'if we have the courage to recognise, and to tell the public, the limitations on our actions. The people's standard of living is determined by forces quite outside the power of Government'. Horobin insisted that economic liberty was central to production, while markets could only be sustained by servicing the needs of the consumer. He was deeply frustrated because he thought liberal-minded MPs were abandoning these economic principles. He wrote, 'The modern liberal (and the Y.M.C.A. young conservative) is tired of early-Victorian economic virtue and prepared to embrace the seductive advances of socialism, because he thinks the advance of knowledge has made such adventures fairly safe. He is in error.'[77]

Elsewhere, Horobin tried to stir up Conservative opposition to planning by associating the cry of 'self-government for industry' with the electioneering tactics of Victorian Liberalism. He argued that if 'self-determination' could not get rid of poverty and unemployment in the nineteenth century then a similar approach in industry was unlikely to have much of an affect in the twentieth century.[78] When Horobin was asked to discuss the potential expansion of social services on the BBC, he reiterated his view of the limited role of government, but he also linked his approach to those members of the electorate he was most keen to represent: 'Once we start deliberately using the social services as a machine for attacking the incomes and savings of the rich and the middle classes, it is a safe bet that the revulsion of public opinion and the loss of public sympathy will be so great that our last state will be worse than the first.'[79] However, despite all of Horobin's efforts to undermine planning and industrial reorganisation, he was only too aware of the limited support he enjoyed in opposing the dominance of 'progressive' politics both in Parliament and in elite media. Horobin complained that 'one is hustled out of court as an obstructionist academic anachronism knowing nothing of the modern world'. It was a feeling of resignation that prompted him to write, 'There is nothing to be done about it—except laugh.'[80]

Concluding Remarks

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[77] Horobin, *The pleasures of planning*, pp. 191-2.
[78] Ian Horobin, 'Planning for paralysis', *Nineteenth Century and After*, 118 (August 1935), p. 198.
[79] Ian Horobin, 'Should the social services be extended?', *The Listener* (15 April 1936), p. 737.
[80] Horobin, 'Planning for paralysis', p. 206. Horobin continued to argue his case along similar lines later in the decade; see Ian Horobin, 'Further thoughts on planning in industry', *Contemporary Review*, 151 (March 1937), pp. 279-87.

'Traditional' Conservatives who were sceptical of 'progressive' Conservatism were a minority voice when it came to publicising their arguments in elite and mass media, but there were enough literary contributions from both sides to stimulate an influential debate on different Conservative solutions to economic and social problems. Writing during the 1990s Alan Clark explained that the 'lack of convergence between the views floated by the Left…and those of the traditional Right is, and has always been, endemic. Some claim it to be a source of strength and vitality. Others argue that being an indicator of "division" it damages the party's electoral standing'.[81] During a period of National Government, this extensive intellectual debate between Conservative MPs, which took place mainly in elite media and on radio, did not damage the Conservative party's or the National Government's standing with the electorate. It is argued here that because of the unique political circumstances of the 1930s Conservative intellectual debate was a source of strength and vitality not only for the party itself, but for Britain's constitutional stability when faced with the challenge of political extremism at home and abroad. The openness of Conservatives to new ideas was widely evident, especially those ideas that can be sourced to the Italian Fascist regime or Keynes, and the fact that they chose to debate these issues at length with each other is important. It demonstrates that they were undecided about the value of these ideas, which is why they rejected rash moves to found or join new political movements like the BUF, or adopt policies like Melchett's Industrial Reorganisation (Enabling) Bill, which some of the 'progressives' called for during the 1930s.

Another fascinating aspect of this debate was the irony that shadowed the ideas of both the 'progressives' and the 'traditionalists'. In most cases, the 'progressives' were not that progressive, while some 'traditionalists' developed an interest in Keynesian expansionism or increased state intervention, mainly because of their engagement with 'progressive' ideas and the National Government's corporatist outlook in agriculture. With the exception of Macmillan, Melchett, and their close followers, neither side offered truly radical economic and political change because each was concerned mainly with cost-cutting and evolutionary progress, despite their concerns for the unemployed and the distressed areas. In fact, among MPs 'pure' anti-progressive voices were as rare as the genuine Conservative radical, at least when it came to publishing ideas in books or periodicals, and broadcasting on radio. The ideological debate was real, but there was still a great deal of common ground. Baldwin and

[81] Alan Clark, *The Tories. Conservatives and the nation state, 1922-1997* (London, 1998), p. 238.

the National Government struck the right balance: they adopted corporatism in agriculture where there was not much to lose, thereby appeasing the more youthful 'progressives', but they refused to go much further, which avoided needlessly antagonising 'traditional' views in the party. Except Horobin, none of the 'traditionalists' had any real impact on Conservative politics after the 1930s. Wilson, perhaps the most interesting character because of his role as a public intellectual who made much of his contacts with working-class constituents, was shot down and killed during the Second World War, which for a man of his age (he was 56) surely represented one final and noble act of service for the country that he romanticised in his books.

To some extent, Conservative intellectual debate did maintain ideological divisions within the party during the 1930s. While this was a strong-point for the party in a period of political instability, since it helped ward off other potential suitors for the party's personnel, in the long-run it surely held the party back from adopting new ideas. However, as Ramsden suggested in his influential account of the ideological and organisational development of Conservative politics before, during, and after the Second World War, perhaps this was not such a bad thing. After all, it was the pragmatic, individualist approach to industrial reorganisation of the 1930s, which, once refashioned, formed the backbone of the Conservative party's electoral success in the 1950s. After much debate in elite Conservative circles, corporatism failed to provide a viable Conservative future. It was the concept of a 'property-owning democracy', a term first coined by Noel Skelton in the 1920s, alongside the idea of a 'mixed economy', a product of the 'Keynesian revolution', which distinguished Conservatism as a *sui generis* political force in what was once referred to as the age of 'consensus'.[82]

[82] Ramsden, 'A party for owners', pp. 57-62. Lawrence Black, in his study of 'affluence' in post-war Britain, acknowledges the traditional view of dubbing the post-1945 period as one of 'consensus' politics, but he argues that historians are now in danger of upsetting the balance in the other direction. See Lawrence Black, 'The impression of affluence: political culture in the 1950s and 1960s', in Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton (eds.), *An affluent society? Britain's post-war 'golden age' revisited* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 85, 92.

Conclusion

Ever since John Stuart Mill labelled the Conservatives as 'the stupid party' it has generally been assumed by academics and British politicians that the left enjoy a monopoly on the production of credible ideas, intellectuals, and literary figures.[1] Conservative leaders from Baldwin to Margaret Thatcher have often played up to the image of the 'stupid party'. Baldwin famously complained that 'intelligentsia' was 'a very ugly word for a very ugly thing',[2] while Thatcher's frosty (to put it mildly) relationship with the academic establishment is well-known. In Bernard Porter's words, she preferred 'instinct' or 'conviction' politics to 'critical thought' and analysis.[3] The abstract and doctrinaire have always been given short shrift by Conservative leaders, but we know that this attitude is sustained in Conservative party circles partly from political expediency. Both Baldwin and Thatcher read books and valued new political ideas in different ways from the leaders of other political parties. Philip Williamson argues that Baldwin's 'public disdain for the "intelligentsia" should be seen for what it was: political and moral criticisms of Liberal, Labour, and secularised intellectuals—not dismissal of intelligence and learning in themselves'.[4] Baldwin disliked socialist intellectuals because they elevated the 'mass against the individual'.[5] Likewise, Brian Harrison argues convincingly that despite Thatcher's disinclination for 'abstract argument…ideas have never been more important in her party's history than when she led it'.[6] This uneasy relationship between ideas and Realpolitik is at the heart of debates over the very nature and existence of Conservatism as an ideology.[7]

As this thesis has demonstrated, Conservatives were extremely active intellectually during the 1930s. The left often attracts more public attention for its intellectual pursuits

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[1] This British assumption is documented in Stefan Collini, *Absent minds. Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 31-2. Mill's comments are discussed in Brian Harrison, 'Mrs Thatcher and the intellectuals', *Twentieth Century British History*, 5 (1994), p. 207.

[2] Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin. Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 256.

[3] Bernard Porter, '"Though not an historian myself…" Margaret Thatcher and the historians', *Twentieth Century British History*, 5 (1994), p 247.

[4] Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 116.

[5] Ibid., p. 289.

[6] Harrison, 'Mrs Thatcher and the intellectuals', p. 244.

[7] For a positive discussion of the debate about Conservatism as an ideology see, E.H.H. Green, 'The strange death of Tory England', *Twentieth Century British History*, 2 (1991), pp. 67-88. Green rightly warns historians not to blindly accept Conservative rhetoric about Conservatism not being an ideology because this in itself is an ideological position.

because Conservatives rarely promise dramatic, programmatic change. Even in the 1930s, Conservative leaders stressed cautious, evolutionary change, but the party was nonetheless keen to promote its rising men of action to create an image of intellectual dynamism on radio and in print. 'Progressive' Conservatism was often promoted by CCO at the expense of other Conservatisms because it was understood that its new or left-leaning ideas were more likely to attract mass audiences, which would then be encouraged to vote Conservative. This form of literary Conservatism was selected from a broader pool of Conservative intellectual debate, which existed to keep pluralism alive within elite Conservative circles.

Baldwin and CCO selected the more 'progressive' men of action to dangle before the public on the BBC because they wanted to market the Conservative party and the National Government as dynamic and forward-thinking forces. They judged the general chaos of Conservative intellectual debate in books and periodicals to be unsuitable for the masses, but they refrained from criticising this output. The party leadership valued different Conservative—and Liberal—'languages' because they sustained the party's intellectual traditions. There were at least five Conservative reading publics who followed these traditions. Three were the publics identified by Lord Lloyd in his letter to Violet Milner.[8] First, was the right wing imperialist public of periodicals like the *National Review*; the most favoured literary space of F.J.C. Hearnshaw. Second, was the broad, centrist, Conservative public of periodicals like the *Nineteenth Century and After*, where many of the MPs in Chapters Six and Seven published. And, finally, was the radical Conservative public who read the *English Review*, which published Lloyd's 'free-thinkers'. These were would-be corporatists like Hugh Sellon and Hugh Molson, and 'progressive' Tory revivalists like W.S. Morrison. But there were two others: the liberal Conservative/ Liberal public who read the *Fortnightly Review*, which J.A.R. Marriott favoured, and, the radical right public, which read Dorothy Crisp in the *Saturday Review*.

This thesis has explored how Conservative intellectuals and MPs addressed these publics. It argues that Conservative intellectual debate mostly demanded loyalty to Baldwin and the parliamentary system of government. This collective public discourse was a major cultural, intellectual, and political barrier to potential challenges to democracy. Fascists like Mosley were unable to penetrate and influence these deeply entrenched publics for two reasons. First, the BUF lacked the literary personnel to have an impact on Conservative

[8] See Chapter One.

elites. Although Mosley and W.E.D. Allen supplied the movement with intellectual publications that were read by some Conservatives, BUF propagandists like William Joyce were so fanatical that they drove the movement to the margin of Conservative thinking.[9] Second, the BUF did not have regular access to radio or mainstream Conservative and Liberal publications.

Though the Conservative leadership valued the existence of literary Conservatism, CCO rarely endorsed specific texts. Tensions arose between the need to address the public at large in an age of mass democracy and the desire to provide intellectual stimulation for the party's elite and younger members. CCO never embraced Conservative authors as part of a comprehensive strategy to rival the left as an intellectual force.[10] These tensions can be seen in memoranda compiled by Joseph Ball after the 1935 election. Ball was concerned that there was a lack of provoking Conservative literature for university students, compared with that being produced by those on the left of British politics.[11] Yet Ball failed to promote the substantial contributions being made by the party's intellectuals and backbench MPs in books and periodicals because he was concerned mainly with modernising the party's political communications and its means of propaganda: he was more interested in the national and popular press, radio, film, and other forms of electoral communication.[12] This

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[9] See Leigh Vaughan-Henry to Oswald Mosley, 25 July 1934, Birmingham University Library, Oswald Mosley papers, Nicholas Mosley deposit, OMN/B/7/2, pp. 1-4. Leigh Vaughan-Henry, a shadowy figure involved with various extremist groups, wrote to Mosley after spending time with the Conservative peer Lord Gisborough. Vaughan-Henry argued that while Gisborough was sympathetic to fascism, more BUF literature on India would be needed to stimulate Gisborough's initial interest. But as he soon realised there was hardly anything available that was suitable for enlisting elite Conservative support. A pamphlet written by Mosley was deemed acceptable, but the same was not true of another publication written by Joyce. He stated that it 'was the most dangerous thing for us to issue now'. Vaughan-Henry drew attention to the extremist tone of Joyce's pamphlet, but also condemned the fascist press and the BUF's style of street-corner oratory. This, he thought, compromised the BUF's potential appeal to mainstream Conservative elites. Lord Gisborough [Richard Godolphin Walmesley Chaloner] was the brother of the famous Conservative MP Walter Long. He changed his name to Chaloner in 1888 in order to inherit ancestral estates in the town of Guisborough. For more background on Leigh Vaughan-Henry see A.W. Brian Simpson, *In the highest degree odious. Detention without trial in wartime Britain* (Oxford, 1994), p. 174.

[10] This attitude continued into the 1940s. R.A. Butler attempted to establish a brain-storming group to investigate new ideas during 1940, but the Conservative party's vice-chairman, Lady Hester Bourne dismissed the suggestion as 'not Conservative' and 'pseudo-intellectual'. See Laura Beers, 'Labour's Britain, fight for it now!', *The Historical Journal*, 52 (2009), p. 682.

[11] Ball's comments are quoted in Collini, *Absent minds*, p. 32.

[12] For Ball's changing views on the media and potential avenues for Conservative propaganda, see 'Some notes and suggestions about propaganda'; memorandum by Joseph Ball, sent to Neville Chamberlain, 14 April 1934, Birmingham University Library, Neville Chamberlain papers, NC8/21/9;

contrasted with Arthur Bryant's quasi-independent intellectual and literary ventures (Ashridge College and the National Book Association), which did much to support Conservative thinkers and writers. Despite some interest, Baldwin and CCO never offered much in terms of official patronage. Their reluctance may have owed something to the fact that when CCO did sponsor specific texts in official Conservative publications for use across the country, its actions resulted in opposition from members of the party who disagreed with propagandising forms of Conservatism that were not reflective of their own beliefs. This resistance to new ideas and specific texts was never a feature of elite Labour circles.[13]

Intellectualising Conservatism remained an important way of boosting MPs' political careers because it could make individuals stand out against the crowd. Making a name for oneself in the elite world was useful in itself, but especially so if it brought the chance to speak for CCO on radio. Electioneering was always the party's main focus, and for this reason it was the young, 'progressive' Conservatives who prospered most under Baldwin's leadership. It was important for Baldwin and CCO to present a near uniform Conservative ideology and they appear to have judged that the 'progressives' had most to offer the National Government on air. In elite media, Conservative MPs and intellectuals, while sharing many ideas and values, were keen to address important questions concerning individualism and collectivism, whether the state should intervene further in areas of economic and social policy, and whether the party should simply embrace the new democratic age, attempt to mitigate its potential effects, or even undermine it. For Conservative elites of the 1930s, these issues were far weightier than those skilfully targeted electoral appeals, which David Jarvis has done much to reveal in his work on the 1920s.[14] These issues were at the very heart of what Conservatism should mean in the 'modern age', which explains why the party leadership was reluctant to publicise or broadcast all aspects of Conservative intellectual debate. E.H.H. Green and Laura Beers have both noted how

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also, 'To the Prime Minister'; a memorandum by Joseph Ball, sent to Neville Chamberlain, June 1938, Birmingham University Library, Neville Chamberlain papers, NC8/21/8.

[13] The importance of Labour theorists and the impact of the party's intellectual figures and writers on the party's development is outlined in Jose Harris, 'Labour's political and social thought', in Duncan Tanner, Pat Thane, and Nick Tiratsoo (eds), *Labour's first century* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 8-45.

[14] See David Jarvis, 'Stanley Baldwin and the ideology of the Conservative response to socialism, 1918-1931' (unpublished PhD thesis; University of Lancaster, 1991); and, 'Mrs Maggs and Betty: the Conservative appeal to women voters in the 1920s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 5 (1994), pp. 129-52; and, 'British Conservatism and class politics in the 1920s', *English Historical Review*, 111 (1996), pp. 59-84.

divided the Conservatives were in contrast to the unity of Labour policy-makers during the 1940s.[15] It is argued here that outside the party leadership such division was already commonplace during the 1930s. Baldwin's importance relates to the fact that he was able to select ideas and 'languages' from different Conservative cultures without isolating those Conservatives whose ideas were either neglected or ignored.

At the same time, most Conservatives found themselves restricted to elite literary culture because newspaper proprietors (and so presumably the public) were not particularly interested in scholarly discourse. Only political stars such as Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George, the press barons themselves (Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere), and, during election campaigns, the leaders of political parties gained full access to the popular press. In this respect, D.L. LeMahieu is right to argue that a new 'culture for democracy' emerged between the wars.[16] This restricted the potential for intellectuals and backbench politicians to interact with the public. But Conservative leaders also believed they understood what the public wanted from their politicians in terms of media output, which meant there was little sign of a 'culture for democracy' within the Conservative party itself; CCO strictly controlled who was able to speak for the party on radio. Conservative politics, in terms of ideas and making reputations, remained an elitist enterprise, especially between election campaigns, which explains why Conservatives were keen to use traditional, elite literary spaces.

This thesis also reinforces Williamson's account of the 1931 crisis and the resulting nature of the National Government. Williamson argues that Oswald Mosley's importance lay not in his policy ideas but in his diagnosis of the realities facing governments who wanted to convert ideas into action. Williamson adds, 'In a diluted form (and without any input of his own) Mosley's objectives of a major realignment, a powerful executive, a small cabinet with special powers, and increased state involvement in economic affairs, were essentially embodied in the National government.'[17] In Chapters Four, Six, and Seven, I have shown that the government sought to market itself simultaneously as a government of action and of

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[15] E.H.H. Green, 'The Conservative party, the state and the electorate, 1945-64', in Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor (eds), *Party, state and society. Electoral behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot, 1997), p. 177. Laura Beers, 'Labour's Britain, fight for it now!', p. 683.

[16] D.L. LeMahieu, *A culture for democracy: mass communication and the cultivated mind in Britain between the wars* (Oxford, 1988), p. 4.

[17] Philip Williamson, *National crisis and National Government. British politics, the economy and empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 521-2.

constitutional stability in both elite circles and on radio. Even though restless Conservative spirits were sometimes frustrated with the pace of economic, political, and social change, most agreed that the government was indeed 'radical', 'forward-looking', or even 'revolutionary'. As Williamson writes, 'the National government did make serious attempts to address the major social, economic, imperial, and international problems, following through earlier initiatives and making important innovations of its own'.[18] The literary contributions of Conservative intellectuals and MPs confirm that those at the centre of political life in the 1930s would have recognised this view. Some embraced a new Conservative politics that mixed 'languages of constitutionalism' with languages of corporatism. Others disliked and rejected corporatism and favoured different ideas, particularly those associated with Keynes, which promised to transform the British economy without sacrificing the interests of the consumer, the small shopkeeper, and some of the most important principles governing Britain's international trade and market economy. Walter Elliot's agricultural policies were an extremely important reference point, especially for younger Conservative members who, like Mosley, wanted 'action'. These policies could be cited by the government and the Conservative party leadership as an example of their 'true' radical intentions, which was vital for encouraging restless spirits on the right to refrain from abandoning Conservative politics for other political movements such as Mosley's BUF.[19]

While I would agree with Martin Pugh's argument that we need to set fascism at the heart of our national story for the interwar period, this thesis outlines an alternative way of achieving this without falling into the trap of exaggerating the importance of links between individual Conservative MPs and the BUF. As I have shown with Hugh Molson and Arnold Wilson, two Conservative MPs whom Pugh puts on his list of fascist sympathisers, occasional comments and sporadic activity that might be seen as pro-fascist often appear different under closer scrutiny, particularly when properly situated within the context of

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[18] Williamson, *National crisis*, pp. 528-9. Williamson gives plenty of examples of government action. He notes how the means test was relaxed in 1932, how unemployment provision was placed on a more secure basis, and how it was extended to include agricultural workers. Slum clearance policies were continued and assisted by new Housing Acts from 1933. The government at least planned to raise the school-leaving age. The employment of women and youth was increasingly regulated. Legislation was also introduced to encourage paid holidays for male workers. Imperial Airways was nationalised. As I have also shown, in a number of important ways agricultural policy was completely transformed.

[19] But also Duncan Sandys' idea for a more radical National Government, see Gary Love, 'The British Movement, Duncan Sandys, and the politics of constitutionalism in the 1930s', *Contemporary British History*, 23 (December 2009), pp. 543-58.

MPs' political rhetoric as a whole and their other intellectual interests. Pugh argues, 'Fascism is best understood not in terms of tight categories, but as part of a spectrum; although the main colours are clear enough, the point is that half the range actually comprises broad bands in which the colours are blurred, making it difficult to say where one ends and another begins.'[20] His comments fail to acknowledge the extensive elite Conservative discourse which largely defined itself *against* fascism, perceiving it as an intellectual challenge to its own ideas and political thought. Despite Pugh's claims, very few Conservative MPs expressed a desire to support or join Mosley's BUF or any other fascist movement. We should ask why this was the case in the context of both what Conservatives said and wrote about fascism, including its vision for an alternative modernity and culture, and of how they sought to reconcile or make safe some aspects of fascist ideology with their own ideas. One of the key arguments of this thesis is that the Conservative party was a very broad coalition of opinion. The preceding chapters have focussed on representative examples of different 'ideologies of Conservatism'. But this does not mean that there were no clear dividing lines between Conservatism and fascism. One should ask why, if political ideas and values were so blurred on the right of interwar British politics, Conservatives and members of the BUF were unable to cooperate or sympathise with each other in public. Clearly, the distinction mattered to both parties at the time, but it mattered for Conservatives in different ways depending on which Conservative traditions, thinkers, and leaders they chose to draw upon when intellectualising their creed, or indeed how they chose to interpret those thinkers and traditions when responding to the challenges facing democracy.

Most of the Conservative intellectuals and MPs analysed here looked for new ways to revive established Conservative values and traditions. Some rejected the politics of *laissez-faire*, which had dominated the nineteenth century, blaming Liberals for Britain's current economic and political difficulties. Others embraced the Liberal inheritance, including democracy (warts and all), because they wanted to absorb Liberals and Liberal traditions within a broad Conservative coalition of opinion as part of their strategy to restrict Labour's electoral appeal. Some were highly selective, choosing to draw on different aspects of pre-Victorian, Victorian, and Edwardian Conservative and Liberal political traditions.

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[20] Pugh, Martin, 'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!' Fascists and fascism in Britain between the wars (London, 2005), p. 6.

Conservatives, like John Boyd-Carpenter, Walter Elliot, Quintin Hogg, Hugh Molson, W.S. Morrison, Eustace Percy, and Hugh Sellon, were happy to work alongside National (or constitutional) Labour during the 1930s because they were supportive of Baldwin's approach to coalition government. They were keen to show that they were 'modern' men and understood that a partisan anti-socialist message was no longer appropriate for the 1930s. Strict anti-socialism prevented the use of state interference in the economy, effectively outlawing important means to address the economic and political consequences of universal suffrage. It also undermined the party's ability to rival the radical reformist claims of fascists like Mosley. Elliot and Morrison wanted to by-pass the nineteenth century and Liberal economics altogether. They believed in an 'organic' society, which was about not just wealth or profit, but about employment and the positive impact of work on individual character. They recognised these attributes in a pre-Victorian Conservatism, which reflected a paternalist or communitarian society. 'Progressive' Conservatives of this stamp felt closer ideologically to socialists than they did to economic or Victorian Liberals. On the other hand, Percy demonstrated that some 'progressive' Conservatives offered policies that were simply out of touch with the political and social realities of the interwar period. He wanted to cut social welfare provision and return to nineteenth century traditions of charitable giving. He hoped thereby to unite workers and employers in a new, economically efficient, social harmony, but this was little more than wishful thinking. Even so, 'progressive' Conservatism was at the forefront of the party's claim to represent working-class voters and it dominated the party's radio output. This outpouring of 'progressive' Conservative opinion played its part in defending the National Government against the charge that it stood for little more than deflation and negation.

Older voices were much more corralled within elite spheres compared with younger 'progressive' Conservatives. However, they were important because they sustained a lively and open debate on values and direction that made the broad church view of Conservatism a living intellectual reality. Respected Conservative figures—products of the nineteenth century, like J.A.R. Marriott, supported the National Government, but ideally they wanted it to represent a mixture of nineteenth century Conservative and Liberal politics. Marriott was keen to warn Baldwin not to isolate those who still believed in economic orthodoxy and limited state intervention in areas of social policy, but he also historicised the Conservative party's tradition of 'Tory Democracy' while marketing it as a defender both of the

constitution and of the monarchy. More important was the fact that he sustained a Whig narrative of democratic advance, which embraced nineteenth century Liberal values. F.J.C. Hearnshaw and Ian Horobin were far more dogmatic about returning to a two party system based on the nineteenth century model, albeit one that was modernised to incorporate the interwar vogue for moderate tariffs. They wanted all believers in economic orthodoxy to unite (including those willing to sustain a deflationary economy in times of national crisis), regardless of their religious divisions, in order to stand against a party of the left, which would represent economic expansionism (or collectivism). Nineteenth century Liberalism was embraced as a natural ally in a modern 'feverish' world, with Hearnshaw making regular appeals for Anglicans and Nonconformists, including fellow Wesleyans, to bury their differences. But Hearnshaw did not welcome all aspects of the Liberal inheritance. He regarded democracy as a utopian ideal, which could not be made to work successfully. He wanted to reverse universal suffrage because he argued that educating Britain's mass democracy was not possible without the necessary educational means to achieve it. At the same time, Dorothy Crisp's economic liberalism was so strong that she tried to mobilise Gladstone's memory to rally Tory opinion against Baldwin's apparently treacherous collectivism. Yet Crisp wanted to restore an aristocratic paternalist state; she had no time for democracy, and campaigned for a return to Walter Bagehot's 'balanced' constitution of 1867. While some Conservatives drew on Liberal traditions and ideas to broaden the outlook of the party, others saw the appropriation of those values as the best means of *narrowing* the scope of National Government in the 1930s.

What to extract from both Conservative and Liberal traditions was a major cause for concern for Conservative intellectuals and MPs in the 1930s. They agreed that they needed to readjust their own thinking or indeed their party's political outlook to account for a new two party system. This was partly the product of the First World War, but many only finally recognised the nature of this shift with the national crisis of 1931.[21] However, the challenge of fascism and revolutionary socialism played a vital role in accelerating Conservative sympathy for democracy, especially during the period 1933-5. This is perhaps one useful way of re-locating fascism at the heart of our national story. For example, the extremist threat formed a vital part of Hearnshaw's strategy to unite Conservatives and Liberals, and

[21] This argument supports Susan Pedersen's view of British politics between 1914 and 1931, see Susan Pedersen, 'From national crisis to "national crisis": British politics, 1914-1931', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (July 1994), pp. 322-35.

Anglicans and Nonconformists, against all those who threatened the teaching of Christian values. Faced with the totalitarian threat, Hearnshaw finally accepted democracy as a 'lesser evil'. For all of Sellon's interest in corporatism and industrial reorganisation (itself inspired by the intellectual challenge of fascism), he ended up concluding that democracy, liberty, and national unity, all of which were realised in the National Government, equalled a distinctly British form of fascism (many socialists said the same). As a result, Sellon had no sympathy for Mosley and the BUF. Hogg's interest in corporatism was also fuelled by the challenge of fascism, but importantly he declared himself against modernism, which he argued was responsible for the rise of fascism. In Hogg's view, modernism could not replace the importance of religion at the heart of national life; therefore, he argued in favour of a revitalised form of 'Tory democracy' instead. Wilson also took the challenge of fascism seriously and explored the potential for corporatism both in an economic and a constitutional sense. But his experience as an MP ultimately convinced him of the virtues of popular democracy and local (rather than corporate) representation.

Baldwin's success in the 1930s rested on the party's wide-ranging intellectual activity. This was mainly carried out by others, but Baldwin tapped into particular aspects of these Conservative 'languages' and traditions. This is why few of the party's elites ever became disgruntled to the point that they were willing to leave the electoral haven of the National Government, which Baldwin's liberal Conservatism orchestrated throughout 1931-37. Yet Baldwin played no role in establishing the conditions for Conservative intellectual debate to prosper. Nineteenth century literary mediums sustained their elite readerships partly because of the 1931 crisis. The National Government was viewed by many Conservatives as a patriotic response to the crisis, and this constrained the parameters of political debate at parliamentary level. Literary debate was less constrained, at least with elite media, but even here contributions never threatened to destabilise Baldwin's carefully constructed coalition of voters. Many felt that democracy had passed its greatest test in 1931, and it was this that probably did most to fuel literary resistance to extremism. Conservatives did much to sustain the intellectual, literary, and political traditions of the past. Acting in unison, these Conservative and Liberal cultures were able to resist the toxic threat of fascism in elite Conservative circles throughout the 1930s.

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